

Pirkei Avos

Chapter One

Avos Intro: 0: 1-5

*All Israel has a share in the World to Come, as it is said: 'And your people are all righteous; they shall inherit the land forever; they are the branch of My planting, My handiwork, in which to take pride.'*¹

כל ישראל יש להם חלק לעולם הבא, שנאמר: „ועמך כלם צדיקים לעולם יירשו ארץ. נצר מטעי, מעשה ידי להתפאר.”¹

Prologue

All Israel has a share.....

Think of Avos as a prescription from God to nurse us back to spiritual health.

This prologue is designed to reassure us.

Just as a doctor who seeks to heal his patient first reassures him that he has a conquerable disease and need not despair. Similarly, this prologue tells us no matter our standing, we are guaranteed a place in Heaven, a share is reserved for each of us.

The word ‘chelek’ can be properly translated as “a plot”. Just as a plot of land must be cultivated in order to yield produce so every person must cultivate his or her potential and make it productive. We can change the promise of a plot in the world-to come from barren to productive by concentrating on our spiritual growth by studying Avos.

Avos: Preface 0: 1-7

*All Israel has a share in the World to Come, as it is said: 'And your people are all righteous; they shall inherit the land forever; they are the branch of My planting, My handiwork, in which to take pride.'*¹

בְּלִישְׁרָאֵל יֵשׁ לָהֶם חֵלֶק לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: „וְעַמְּךָ כֻּלָּם צְדִיקִים, לְעוֹלָם יִירְשׁוּ אֶרֶץ, נִצֵּר מִטְעִי, מַעֲשֵׂה יָדֶי לְהִתְפָּאֵר.”¹

Every Israelite – who is not an idol worshipper has a portion in the world to come

- dependent on his good deeds.

Even a person who sins has some good in him. Each person has a greater or lesser degree of good.

R Joseph Ibn Cospie - But the portions are unequal else God would be unjust.

The righteous of all peoples have a portion in the world to come - not dependent on a savior and man is not subject to eternal perdition.

All Israel has a share in the World to Come, as it is said: 'And your people are all righteous; they shall inherit the land forever; they are the branch of My planting, My handiwork, in which to take pride.'¹

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and your people are all righteous

The world is so corrupt and people so materialistic that with but one Mitzvah you are superior and more righteous than almost everybody. Certainly you will merit your place in the world to come.

But the Torah says Lev 19:2, “You shall be holy for I Hashem your God am Holy”. Don’t compare yourself to others, use God as a barometer not other people and then you will know what is truly expected of you.

Avos Intro: 15-16

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a branch of my planting

Every Jew is a branch, a limb, of the Divine presence. As long as the limb is attached there is hope that it can be healed.

Art Scroll p4

Avos 1:1:2-3

[1] **מֹשֶׁה** *Moses received the Torah from Sinai and transmitted it to Joshua; Joshua to the Elders; the Elders to the Prophets; and the Prophets transmitted it to the Men of the Great Assembly. They [the Men of the Great Assembly] said three things: Be deliberate in judgment; develop many disciples; and make a fence for the Torah.*

[א] **מֹשֶׁה** קבל תורה מסיני, ומסרה ליהושע, ויהושע לזקנים, וזקנים לנביאים, ונביאים מסרוה לאנשי כנסת הגדולה. הם אמרו שלשה דברים: הוו מתונים בדין, והעמידו תלמידים הרבה, ועשו סג לתורה.

Received Torah

What did Moshe receive?

10 commandments

written law

oral law

* Torah

Gematria is 611.

The people received the first two of the laws directly from God. They could not hear the rest because of the great fear they had and asked Moshe to receive the rest of the 613 Mitzvot for them.

Torah not HaTorah – indicating Moshe received all he could hold. Meam Loez 15

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Torah

Refers to written law - ‘Torah Shebichtav’ – 5 books of Moses and the oral law
‘Torah Shebaalpeh’ – Talmud.

The first is like a world or global map.

The second is like a street map - specific.

Art Scroll p6

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From Sinai

Why does it not say Moses received Torah from God?

Sinai was a low mountain – humble.

Moses was humble.

If we show humility we can also receive Torah.

- The mem in 'Mi Sinai' Gematria is 40, alluding to the 40 days that Moses spent on the mountain. Meam Loez 16
- Mem - 40 – the 40 generations during which the oral law was transmitted until the completion of the Talmud by Rav Assi and Ravina C500 CE
- Humble Moshe was reluctant to approach powerful and mighty Pharaoh. He had no hesitation in approaching a low and humble mountain.

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From Sinai

What does this mean? - Why does it not say from God?

From the mountain?

From the time of Sinai? - No, The people had certain Mitzvot before Sinai.

From the intensive soul searching solitude on Mt. Sinai and the overpowering sensitivity to divine inspiration.

Art Scroll p6

From Sinai means because of the experience on Mt. Sinai.

Abarbanel p21

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And handed it on to Joshua

Why not to Elazar the high priest to whom even Joshua was subordinate? He could have been given preference over Joshua?

Num 27:21 “Elazar.....shall ask counsel (from God) for him (Joshua)”.

Note! Moshe did not ask Hashem to appoint one of his son's to succeed him.

Art Scroll p6

Joshua, not Elazar, was totally surrounded by the aura and personality of Moshe and learned from him to lead the people.

Abarbanel p22

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Be deliberate in judgement (cautious)

Art Scroll p10

This admonition is directed at judges.

Do not rush to render a verdict.

Study the case well.

Straighten things slowly.

Judge fairly.

Meam Loez p17

Could also be directed to litigants.

Be cautious in going to judgement. Don't rush to the courts. Try to resolve your differences without courts.

Abarbanel p25

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Be deliberate in judgement.

A woman sent her grandson to ask a great Rabbi a question. The question was a simple almost silly question. The Rabbi heard the boy – pulled a large volume of Shulchan Aruch from his bookshelf and spent several minutes studying it. Finally he closed the book turned to the boy and gave him the answer.

The question asked obviously did not require any research on the Rabbi's part but by giving the impression that he took his question seriously he made sure the boy would not be ashamed to seek guidance on future occasions.

Avos 1:1:23-25

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Raise up many students.

Accept as many students as possible.

Don't analyze the motives of the students to see if they are truly sincere since if they study Torah their motives will likely improve. Many a sinner was attracted to Torah and rose up righteous and formed worthy generations.

The Mishnah says Raise Up not merely teach.

This is addressed not only to teachers

but also to the wealthy who have the means and the obligation to see to their support.

- Beit Shamai – don't waste your time on inferior unmotivated students.
- Beit Hillel – no one can tell in advance who will turn out to be a master/teacher.

R Ari Hershberg - By raising up many students – you succeed in creating a fence for the Torah in:26-28.

- Take the harder more complete way and be certain that you did not violate the law-create a fence.

Avos:1:1:5-6, 26-28

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לתורה.

From this point onwards we concentrate not on those who transmitted the Torah
but upon those who received it.

Abarbanel p 24

Avos 1:2:1-6

[2] *Shimon the Righteous was among the survivors of the Great Assembly. He used to say: The world depends on three things – on Torah study, on the service [of God], and on kind deeds.*

[ב] שִׁמְעוֹן הַצַּדִּיק הָיָה מִשְׁתַּיִרֵי כְנֶסֶת הַגְּדוֹלָה. הוּא הָיָה אוֹמֵר: עַל
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חַסְדִּים.

Shimon the righteous was one of the remnants of the great assembly.

He was Kohen Gadol after Ezra and served for 40 years.

He persuaded Alexander the Great not to conquer Eretz Yisroel.

He used to say:

“Before I give comments to others I become that person.” He saw himself in the other person’s shoes. He identified with the other person to the point that he became him and only after that did he speak.

That is what a proper leader must do.

Avos 1:2:10-14

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On three things the world stands

Even though things change and the world progresses these principles are eternal they stand forever and the world depends upon them.

Abraham – stands for kindness and hospitality.

Issac stands for service of God - he permitted himself to be a sacrifice.

Yaakov represents Torah study - he spent 14 years studying in the Yeshivah of Shem V'Ever.

Art Scroll p14

Avos 1:2 15-21

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1. 'Al HaTorah' on the Torah .. we must develop many students.
The more students there are the more Torah there is in the world.
Torah = knowledge wisdom and insight.
2. 'Al HaAvodah' - on the service – sacrificial service in the Temple or the observance of the commandments. The making of a fence for the Torah safeguards the commandments between man and God from being violated.
3. 'V'algemilus chasadim' - on acts of kindness. Be deliberate in judgement – fair laws carefully administrated creates a safe society free of strife This is a great kindness between man and man-it:

Meam Loez p 20-21

1. brings joy to bride and bridegroom
2. comforts the mourner
3. visits the sick and lends money free of interest
4. buries the dead and passes no judgement on another person
5. promotes good will

Abarbanel p26

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On the Torah

The world rest on three things:

1. on the acceptance of the Torah
2. on the study of the Torah
3. on the giving of the Torah

and consistent study of Torah - this sustains the entire cosmos.

Avos 1:2:17-18

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The sacrificial service

Since the destruction of the Temple we supplant sacrifices with Prayer.

How did we come to decide that prayer could work to do this?

Based on:

Deuteronomy 11-13 - “serve Him with all your heart”.

Psalms 51:18 - “For you do not desire a sacrifice. An ascent offering you do not want. My Lord Hashem open my lips that my mouth may declare your praise”.

Accept my prayers in place of a sacrifice.

Grant me pardon and forgive my sin.

Art Scroll p15

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חֲסָדִים.

and upon acts of loving kindness

based on Psalms 89:3 “For I said, The world will be built through kindness”.

Rambam Hilchos Aivel - 14:1

visit the sick and inquire after their welfare

bring a bride to the wedding canopy

accompany guests who are departing

join in the burial and eulogy

gladden the hearts of bride and groom

Lev 19:18 - you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Rambam - All things that you want others to do for you - you should do for others.

Which is better acts of kindness or acts of charity?

kindness can be done for rich or poor – charity only for the poor.

kindness can be done personally or with money-charity only with money

kindness encompasses all of man's interpersonal relationships – charity only some of them.

Therefore kindness is better. Art Scroll p15

Avos 1:3:20-30

[3] Antigonos, leader of Socho, received the tradition from Shimon the Righteous. He used to say: Be not like servants who serve their master for the sake of receiving a reward; instead be like servants who serve their master not for the sake of receiving a reward. And let the awe of Heaven be upon you.

[ג] אַנטִיגֹנוס איש סוכו קבל משמעון הצדיק. הוא היה אומר: אל תהיו כעבדים המשמשים את הרב על מנת לקבל פרס; אלא הוו כעבדים המשמשים את הרב שלא על מנת לקבל פרס; ויהי מורא שמים עליכם.

Be like servants who serve their master without the condition of receiving a reward.

Vilna Gaon - The owner of an esrog was willing to sell it but only on condition that the Zechus (credit) for the Mitzvah be credited to the seller. The Gaon joyfully agreed and said, “all my life I have been eager to fulfill this Mishnah and now I finally have this opportunity since I have given up my right to its reward”
(Rabbi Chaim Shmulevitz).

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On condition of receiving reward

Antigonus - be not as servants who serve the master for the sake of receiving a reward....

His students misunderstood and learned that there is no reward for serving God and as a result rejected the words of the rabbi's and only followed the written Torah laws.

Zaddok's followers were called Zadukim (Sadducees and Boethus – Boethusim held out no hope for the afterlife since they understood mistakenly that there is no reward for serving God. These people, the Sadducees, were able to gain ascendancy over the sages during many periods of the second Temple era.

[3] Antigonus, leader of Socho, received the tradition from Shimon the Righteous. He used to say: Be not like servants who serve their master for the sake of receiving a reward; instead be like servants who serve their master not for the sake of receiving a reward. And let the awe of Heaven be upon you.

[ג] אַנטיגֶנוס איש סוכו קבל משמעון הצדיק. הוא היה אומר: אל תהיו כעבדים המשמשים את הרב על מנת לקבל פרס; אלא הוו כעבדים המשמשים את הרב שלא על מנת לקבל פרס; ויהי מורא שמים עליכם.

not for the sake of a reward

but in Pesachim 8a a father says, “let this money go to charity so that my sick child may live.” and he is considered a righteous person.

Are you not required to obey the Mitzvot out of love and not expect a reward?

Then why does it say fear of heaven?

Abravanel - Joseph Karo says the fear spoken of here is the fear for your welfare that Hashem will have for you.

Think – a person, or a child gets many benefits from parents and should feel obligated to do everything the parent wants – out of gratitude. In a way he has already been rewarded the least he can do is not to expect another reward.

If you follow the Torah expecting a reward and instead life gives you trouble you might be discouraged and quit .. Therefore, do follow but don't expect another reward, God has already given you many.

Avos 1:3:2:10-19

[3] Antigonus, leader of Socho, received the tradition from Shimon the Righteous. He used to say: Be not like servants who serve their master for the sake of receiving a reward; instead be like servants who serve their master not for the sake of receiving a reward. And let the awe of Heaven be upon you.

[ג] אַנְטִיגֹנוֹס אִישׁ סוֹכוֹ קִבֵּל מִשְׁמֵעוֹן הַצְדִּיק. הוּא הָיָה אוֹמֵר: אֶל תְּהִיוּ
בְּעֲבָדִים הַמְשַׁמְשִׁין אֶת הָרֵב עַל מְנַת לְקַבֵּל פְּרָס; אֶלֹא הֵיוּ בְּעֲבָדִים
הַמְשַׁמְשִׁין אֶת הָרֵב שְׁלֹא עַל מְנַת לְקַבֵּל פְּרָס; וְיִהְיֶה מוֹרָא שָׁמַיִם עֲלֵיכֶם.

Serve not to receive a reward but.....

Art Scroll p16

Think of it this way

2 tasks – that take the same amount of time,

1. to carry a heavy load if you do it only to be paid

there is no pleasure in the task itself.

2. to eat a sumptuous meal – you do it because there is intrinsic pleasure
in the task itself.

Think of service to Hashem in the same way,

not that you are forced to do it,

not that you will be paid for it,

but because there is intrinsic pleasure for you in doing it.

Avos 1:3: 26-34

[3] *Antigonus, leader of Socho, received the tradition from Shimon the Righteous. He used to say: Be not like servants who serve their master for the sake of receiving a reward; instead be like servants who serve their master not for the sake of receiving a reward. And let the awe of Heaven be upon you.*

[ג] אַנטיגֶנוס איש סוכו קבל משמעון הצדיק. הוא היה אומר: אל תהיו כעבדים המשמשים את הרב על מנת לקבל פרס; אלא הוו כעבדים המשמשים את הרב שלא על מנת לקבל פרס; ויהי מורא שמים עליכם.

לֹא לְמַעַן יִשְׁלַח לָנוּ אֱלֹהִים מַגֵּן לְקַבֵּל תְּשׁוּבָתָנוּ to receive a prize

let fear of heaven be upon you.

You should do as God orders out of gratitude for all He has done for you (like for parents who adopted you) and not expect or demand additional benefits.

For if you don't do God's will it will seem that you are not grateful and then you should be punished.

“..let the fear of heaven be upon you”.

Love of God will inspire fulfillment of the positive commandments.

Fear of God will inspire fulfillment of the negative commandments.

Meam Loez p25

Do God's will with love without expecting reward.

Conduct yourself with your fellow man with fear of Heaven.

Kravitz

Avos 1:4:10-19

[4] Yose ben Yoezer, leader of Tz'redah and Yose ben Yochanan, leader of Jerusalem, received the tradition from them. Yose ben Yoezer, leader of Tz'redah, says: Let your house be a meeting place for sages; sit in the dust of their feet; and drink in their words thirstily.

[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.

Let your house be a meeting place for Torah Scholars

you will learn by being in their company,
you will assimilate wisdom from them,
you will experience their actions as well as their words,
since their actions constitute a living lesson in how to bring Torah into your daily life.

This Mishnah secondarily teaches that you must conduct yourself in a manner such that Torah Scholars would be willing to come to your house.

Avos 1:4:19-32

[4] Yose ben Yoezer, leader of Tz'redah and Yose ben Yochanan, leader of Jerusalem, received the tradition from them. Yose ben Yoezer, leader of Tz'redah, says: Let your house be a meeting place for sages; sit in the dust of their feet; and drink in their words thirstily.

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- Your house a meeting place of sages: 19-23

.. You will be sure to learn since Torah will be taught in your house just as a person who visits a perfume factory will carry away some of its fragrance.

- Powder yourself with the dust of their feet: 24-27

Even though it is your house let the scholars lead. Consider yourself as dust and as a guest in their presence. Sit at their feet. Follow their path and their dust will fall on you.

Who sits with the wise will become more wise himself. Like a person who deals with pollen - he becomes more sweet - smelling himself.

- Drink their words with thirst :28-32

Whenever you hear a Torah lesson be like a person who is dying of thirst and is offered a drink of water. Develop a good attitude so that you are not bored with the readings of scholars.

Avos 1:4:28-32

[4] Yose ben Yoezer, leader of Tz'redah and Yose ben Yochanan, leader of Jerusalem, received the tradition from them. Yose ben Yoezer, leader of Tz'redah, says: Let your house be a meeting place for sages; sit in the dust of their feet; and drink in their words thirstily.

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Drink their words with thirst

- Abarbanel suggests that this allusion advises learning in small doses intermittently with pauses to think, analyze and digest the material just as a thirsty – dehydrated person should imbibe water with moderation and self discipline. Sip a little at a time and it will do you the most good.

Abarbanel p37

Avos 1:5: 11-19

[5] Yose ben Yochanan, leader of Jerusalem, says: Let your house be open wide; treat the poor as members of your household; and do not converse excessively with a woman. They said this even about one's own wife; surely it applies to another's wife. Consequently, the Sages said: Anyone who converses excessively with a woman causes evil to himself, neglects Torah study and will eventually inherit Gehinnom.

[ה] יוסי בן יוחנן איש ירושלים אומר: יהי ביתך פתוח לרִוּחָה, ויהיו עניים בני ביתך, ואל תרבה שיחה עם האשה. באשתו אמרו, קל וחמר באשת חברו. מכאן אמרו חכמים: כל המרבה שיחה עם האשה — גורם רעה לעצמו, ובוטל מדברי תורה, וסופו יורש גיהנם.

Treat the poor as members of your household and do not converse excessively with women.

Why the juxtaposition of charity – with idle talk with women?

If your house is open and charitable – women may request help and you may be tempted to take advantage of them and not even talk much with your wife.

Your wife may become concerned for her security and begrudge the charity the husband wishes to give.

Avos 1:5: 15-19

[5] Yose ben Yochanan, leader of Jerusalem, says: Let your house be open wide; treat the poor as members of your household; and do not converse excessively with a woman. They said this even about one's own wife; surely it applies to another's wife. Consequently, the Sages said: Anyone who converses excessively with a woman causes evil to himself, neglects Torah study and will eventually inherit Gehinnom.

[ה] יוסי בן יוחנן איש ירושלים אומר: יהי ביתך פתוח לרנחה, ויהיו עניים בני ביתך, ואל תרבה שיחה עם האשה. באשתו אמרו. קל וחומר באשת חברו. מכאן אמרו חכמים: כל המרבה שיחה עם האשה — גורם רעה לעצמו, ובוטל מדברי תורה, וסופו יורש גיהנם.

Do not engage in excessive talk with the woman

means your wife.

Use the time for Torah Study – otherwise you will be ignorant of the laws – violate them and inherit purgatory.

If one's wife learns of all the insults her husband suffers during the business day she may:

- incite him to retaliate or
- lose respect for him
- or get in a fight with the other man's wife!!

Avos 1:6: 12-14

[6] Yehoshua ben Perachyah and Nittai of Arbel received the tradition from them. Yehoshua ben Perachyah says: Accept a teacher upon yourself; acquire a friend for yourself, and judge everyone favorably.

[ו] יְהוֹשֻעַ בֶּן פְּרַחְיָה וְנִתַּאי הָאֲרֵבֵלִי קִבְּלוּ מֵהֶם. יְהוֹשֻעַ בֶּן פְּרַחְיָה אוֹמֵר: עֲשֵׂה לָךְ רֵב, וְקַנֵּה לָךְ חֵבֵר, וְהוּי דָן אֶת כָּל הָאָדָם לְכַף זְכוּת.

Provide yourself with a teacher

make for yourself:

- Be sure your community has a Rav or alternatively make yourself into a Rav-become knowledgeable.
- Rav – singular – one teacher for basic knowledge even if he is equal or inferior to you intellectually.

Studying with another person is more effective than studying alone.

Rambam - Exchange of ideas yields greater clarity.

One remembers better what is taught to him by another person.

Make yourself a Rav – invest in the education of an outstanding student enabling him to develop into a teacher from whom you can learn.

Submit to a mentor.

Avos 1:6: 12-14

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[ו] יהושע בן פרחיה ונחמאי הארכלי קבלו מהם. יהושע בן פרחיה אומר: עשה לך רב, וקנה לך חבר, והוי דן את כל האדם לכף זכות.

Acquire for yourself a teacher

Could be a commentary on the Posuk 1:4 – rather than be near scholars and pick up tidbits of the masters in an unorganized and undisciplined fashion choose a primary master and learn as much as you can from him and then you can go on to other masters. Also, by you choosing a person to be your teacher you can make him become a teacher.

- An unorganized educational program is like an upset stomach which devoured all kinds of foodstuffs at one sitting.

Avos 1:6: 15-17

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buy yourself a companion

You may have to seek help from a friend – even to spend money to keep a companion.

Even the wisest person requires advice.

Rashi - Some say this refers to purchase of books – books are friends.

Abarbanel - Judge all men meritoriously.

Even though you choose one teacher you can learn important things from others as well. Consider all people valuable and as people from who you can learn.

Abarbanel 45

This maxim is a warning against solitary Torah study.

Art Scroll p25

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and judge everyone favorably.

Judge people in a positive light.

What if you personally see a completely righteous person doing something undeniably evil? Judge him favorably – perhaps you don't understand. Understand his circumstances. Perhaps he has already repented (Berachos 19a). One who judges others favorably will be judged favorably in the Heavenly courts (Rashi).

If something negative occurs sit down and write about all the positive things that person has done in the past. Don't condemn them for an isolated incident. Take a longer view and you will doubtless see the preponderance of positive.

Avos 1:6: 18-24

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[ו] יְהוֹשֻעַ בֶּן פְּרַחְיָה וְנִתַּי הָאֲרֵבֵלִי קִבְּלוּ מֵהֵם. יְהוֹשֻעַ בֶּן פְּרַחְיָה אוֹמֵר: עֲשֵׂה לָךְ רֵב, וְקַנֵּה לָךְ חֵבֵר, וְהָיִי לְךָ אֶת כָּל הָאָדָם לְכַף זְכוּת.

Judge every man on the scale of merit.

Rambam – if you see a person doing or saying something that could be interpreted favorably or unfavorably interpret his action favorably.

R' Judah Alter – the words ‘Kol Adom’ means “the whole man” Judge the whole man on the scale of merit. Do not see only his faults but see the good in him also.

R Aharon of Karlin – how much more so should we judge the Almighty favorably and not question His ways or actions.

Avos 1:7: 4-13

[7] Nittai of Arbel says: Distance yourself from a bad neighbor; do not associate with a wicked person; and do not despair of retribution.

[ז] נתאי הארכלי אומר: הרחק משכן רע, ואל תתחבר לרשע, ואל תתיאש מן הפרענות.

Keep away from a bad neighbor
do not associate with a wicked person
and do not abandon hope of retribution.

A bad neighbor who does not keep or actually respect Torah law will cause you to have bad habits and bad practices. Check before you move into any neighborhood – Metsudah 19.

An evil person will be punished and if you are close to him you could also suffer. Even though you see evil prosper have confidence in retribution – the wicked will suffer in the end.

[8] Yehudah ben Tabbai and Shimon ben Shatach received the tradition from them. Yehudah ben Tabbai says: [When serving as a judge] do not act as a lawyer; when the litigants stand before you, consider them both as guilty; but when they are dismissed from you, consider them both as innocent, provided they have accepted the judgment.

[ח] יהודה בן טבאי ושמועון בן שטח קבלו מהם. יהודה בן טבאי אומר: אל תעש צדמך בעורכי הדין; וכשיהיו בעלי הדין עומדים לפניך, יהיו בעיניך ברשעים; וכשנפטרים מלפניך, יהיו בעיניך כזכאין. כשקבלו עליהם את הדין.

(When you serve as a judge) Don't act like a lawyer.

Don't advise either litigant.

Always be an impartial arbiter.

You may not announce the verdict unless both litigants or at least their representatives are present.

Don't encourage litigants to use your courtroom.

Art Scroll p30

Same should be said for doctors. Doctors, don't encourage patients to use your services.

The common way to select a legal venue and a panel of judges is for each of the litigants to appoint a member of the tribunal and they select a third. This dictum admonishes the judges not to represent the party that appointed you but be impartial and open to all sides of the question.

Art Scroll p30

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[ח] יהודה בן טבאי ושמועון בן שטח קבלו מהם. יהודה בן טבאי אומר: אל תעש צצמך בעורכי הדין; וכשיהיו בעלי הדין עומדים לפניך, יהיו בעיניך ברשעים; וכשנפטרים מלפניך, יהיו בעיניך כזכאין. כשקבלו עליהם את הדין.

Don't be like lawyers

Students, when your Rabbi is deciding a case do not discuss the case as though you are the equal of your Rebbi.

Question each litigant in depth with the assumption that he is lying – don't accept what one person says because you think he is honest – consider him to be not honest during the litigation and establish the authenticity and truthfulness of every statement.

Later, afterwards, if they both accept the judgement, consider them each honest. Even though one must have been lying or at least mistaken in the litigation. If they accept the court's judgement they are to be considered honest and respectable.

Even if he lied if he accepted the judgement he must have repented since he is now acting honorably.

Avos 1:9:5-9

[9] Shimon ben Shatach says: Interrogate the witnesses extensively; and be cautious with your words, lest they learn to lie.

[ט] שמעון בן שטח אומר: הוי מרבה לחקור את העדים; והוי זהיר בדבריה, שמא מתוכם ילמדו לשקר.

Examine the witnesses thoroughly

About the basic facts, time and place and other relevant details.

- Be careful not let them understand what you are looking to hear for they may stretch the truth to have you hear what you wish to hear.
- Shimon ben Shatach had a son who was convicted and executed on the testimony of false witnesses.

- Sanhedrin 44b (Rashi) Metsudah 23

Avos 1:10:7-12
Weiss #505

[10] Shemayah and Avtalyon received the tradition from them. Shemayah says: Love work; despise lordliness; and do not become overly familiar with the government.

וְיִשְׁמָעִיָּה וְאַבְטָלְיוֹן קִבְּלוּ מֵהֶם. שְׁמַעְיָה אוֹמֵר: אַהֲבֵה אֶת הַמְּלָאכָה,
וּשְׂנֵא אֶת הָרִבּוּנוֹת, וְאַל תִּתְנוּרַע לָרִשּׁוֹת.

Love work but hate lordship.

Yoma 86b – authority (power) buries those who possess it.

Rambam – commentary on Avos – once a person becomes a leader of a community below he is considered to be a transgressor above.

Irving M Bunim - enjoy the creative possibilities but despise the trappings of the position.

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Main theme – personal independence.

Love work - he who has idle days may use his time for mischief. Idleness – the mother of many evils. Killing time is really killing one's own chances for success in life.

Hate lordship – he who seeks mastery arouses jealousy and envy in others.

Despise positions of power. Leadership is enslavement – a person will do anything to preserve his power.

Avoid the ruling party - he who seeks contact with and friendship of the ruling party might become haughty.

Avoid powerful friends.

Rambam

Live a private life.

Remain in a humble position.

Support yourself by your own labors.

This will make you truly free.

Avos 1:10:7-9

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Love work: idleness leads to mental atrophy (Kesubos 59b) anyone can find some kind of work to support himself and his family. People say, “this work is not prestigious enough for me it does not befit a person of my station. I am a Kohen – I am a great man and therefore can’t do this lowly work”, Pesachim 13a. Love work – any type of work.

Despise positions of power: power corrupts.

On the other hand if you despise power who should assume the position of power? Someone who does not despise it? Someone who does not appreciate the gravity of the responsibility? Strangely, one who despises holding positions of power is by definition most suited to hold such positions.

Despise positions of power-yet hold them for the sake of Heaven.

[10] *Shemayah and Avtalyon received the tradition from them. Shemayah says: Love work; despise lordliness; and do not become overly familiar with the government.*

וְשִׁמְעִיָּה וְאַבְטָלְיוֹן קִבְּלוּ מֵהֶם. שְׁמֵעִיָּה אוֹמֵר: אַהֲבֵה אֶת הַמְּלָאכָה, וְשִׁנְאֵה אֶת הַרְבִּנוּת, וְאַל תִּתְּנוּעַ לְרִשּׁוֹת.

Love work, loathe status and don't make yourself known to the government.

- Even if you are wealthy learn a trade or profession, idle time will lead to a bad result. Don't consider yourself too great to work. If you are poor don't depend on charity. Metsudah p24

- Loath Status

“Yichus” - “I come from a famous family”. A person may think others are beneath him or he is too good to work at such a job.

Remember Joseph who though he was superior – he heard the words, “our father your servant”, 10 times without protest and lost 10 years of his life.

- Avoid government authority:

nothing good can come of it.

They use you for their advancement not yours - Metsudah 25 serving them diminishes your service to Hashem.

[11] Avtalyon says: *Scholars, be cautious with your words, for you may incur the penalty of exile and be banished to a place of evil waters [heresy]. The disciples who follow you there may drink and die, and consequently the Name of Heaven will be desecrated.*

[יא] אַבְטַלְיוֹן אוֹמֵר: חֲכָמִים, הִזְהָרוּ בְּדִבְרֵיכֶם, שֶׁמָּא תִּחְוָבוּ חוֹבֵת גְּלוּת וְתִגְלוּ לַמָּקוֹם מַיִם הָרָעִים, וַיִּשְׁתּוּ הַתַּלְמִידִים הַבָּאִים אַחֲרֵיכֶם וַיָּמּוּתוּ, וְנִמְצָא שֵׁם שָׁמַיִם מִתְחַלֵּל.

Sages – beware of what you say

don't use ambiguous words, speak clearly.

Meam Loez

- Just as judges must be wary 1:8 in what they say lest witnesses learn how to answer from their cues, so every learned person who speaks must be sensitive to the effects his statement may have.
- The scholars are culpable for not teaching properly – for teaching in a manner that can be misunderstood.

Their disciples will be in error.

The disciples of the disciples will be totally ignorant, won't be able to defend the faith and may become apostates – i.e., Heaven will be desecrated.

- Also be wary of what you say – be aware of what your student is ready to accept – how intellectually prepared the student is to grasp the esoteric depths of Torah learning – know your student.
- Moshe revealed only simple principles to the Bnei Yisroel.

Abarbanel

Avos 1:11:19-22

[11] *Avtalyon says: Scholars, be cautious with your words, for you may incur the penalty of exile and be banished to a place of evil waters [heresy]. The disciples who follow you there may drink and die, and consequently the Name of Heaven will be desecrated.*

[יא] אַבְטַלְיוֹן אוֹמֵר: חֲכָמִים, הִזְהָרוּ בְּדִבְרֵיכֶם, שֶׁמָּא תִּחְוָבוּ חֹבֶת גְּלוּת וְתִגְלוּ לְמָקוֹם מַיִם הָרָעִים, וְיִשְׁתּוּ הַתַּלְמִידִים הַבָּאִים אַחֲרֵיכֶם וְיָמוּתוּ, וְנִמְצָא שֵׁם שָׁמַיִם מִתְחַלֵּל.

And the Name of Heaven may be desecrated.

An example:

Zsaddok and Boethus taught that a person should serve God without expectation of reward. This was misinterpreted to mean that there is no reward or punishment for a person's deeds and as a result many people believed doing a Mitzvah, or worse, doing bad deeds had no consequence. Of course, consequence for one's deeds is a basic tenet of our faith but unclear words led people astray.

People who speak must:

Practice what they preach.

No teaching is as powerful as a personal example.

No teaching is as harmful as a hypocritical one.

Midrash Shmuel

Avoth 1:11:10-13

[11] Avtalyon says: *Scholars, be cautious with your words, for you may incur the penalty of exile and be banished to a place of evil waters [heresy]. The disciples who follow you there may drink and die, and consequently the Name of Heaven will be desecrated.*

[יא] אַבְטָלְיוֹן אוֹמֵר: חֲכָמִים, הִזָּהְרוּ בְּדַבָּרֵיכֶם, שֶׁמָּא תִּחְוְבוּ חוֹבֵת גְּלוּת וְתִגְלוּ לְמָקוֹם מַיִם הָרָעִים, וַיִּשְׁתּוּ הַתַּלְמִידִים הַבָּאִים אַחֲרֵיכֶם וַיָּמוּתוּ, וְנִמְצָא שֵׁם שָׁמַיִם מִתְחַלֵּל.

Place of evil waters

- Evil water means apriorsim – heretics.

A heretic will distort his words to fit his false beliefs and the students who follow will drink of them.

Water is a metaphor for Torah. Though both types of water appear the same, one is the elixer of life and the other a bitter toxin.

Art Scroll p36

Avos 1:12:10

[12] Hillel and Shammai received the tradition from them. Hillel says: Be among the disciples of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing peace loving people, and bringing them closer to the Torah. [יב] הלל ושמאי קבלו מהם. הלל אומר: הוי מתלמידיו של אהרן, אוהב שלום ורודף שלום, אוהב את הכריות ומקרבן לתורה.]

Aaron

“all the house of Israel wept for him” - Num 20:29

Means men, women and children He was such a great peacemaker all missed him.

When Moses died it says, “The sons of Israel wept for Moses”, Deut 34:8. The men to whom he taught Torah wept but no one else.

- This Mishnah talks of peace – what is peace?

Opponents reach agreement?

Cessation of battle?

} May be superficial and easily negated

Peace is a positive quality – unity, solidarity, meeting of the minds. Be active in peace making but not with any ulterior motive. Be armed with an abundance of love yourself and you can then establish peace among others.

Avos 1:12:1-4

[12] *Hillel and Shammai received the tradition from them. Hillel says: Be among the disciples of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing peace loving people, and bringing them closer to the Torah.*

(יב) הִלֵּל וְשַׁמַּי קִבְּלוּ מֵהֶם. הִלֵּל אוֹמֵר: הָיִי מִתַּלְמִידֵי שֶׁל אַהֲרֹן, אוֹהֵב שְׁלוֹם וְרוֹדֵף שְׁלוֹם, אוֹהֵב אֶת הַבְּרִיּוֹת וּמִקְרִיב לַתּוֹרָה.

Hillel and Shammai received from them.

From whom? Shemayah and Avtalyon. This sets the historical record.

Hillel said, “be among the disciples of Aaron”, learn from his ways to the best of your ability- don’t try to be equal to Aaron that would not be possible but learn from his example.

Love peace – Aaron turned many away from conflict. He would tell each party to a disagreement that the other person wanted to resolve their differences.

Pursue peace – don’t keep to yourself you must pursue peace-be active.

Love people – befriend even sinners. Aaron would overwhelm people with his display of affection to turn them closer to Torah living and bring them close to the Torah. By these methods of love and respect he would treat a person as though he possessed knowledge and wisdom and people would strive to become knowledgeable and wise like he was.

Aaron brought people close to Torah not by harsh threats but by gentle pleasant words showing respect and esteem for all people.

He would apologize to both sides of a dispute and .. make peace.

Avos 1:12:15-19

Weiss #8

[12] *Hillel and Shammai received the tradition from them. Hillel says: Be among the disciples of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing peace loving people, and bringing them closer to the Torah.*

ניב] הלל ושמאי קבלו מהם. הלל אומר: הוי מתלמידיו של אהרן. אוהב שלום ורודף שלום, אוהב את הבריות ומקרֵבן לתורה.

Loving mankind and drawing them to the Torah.

Aaron – associated with evil people in order to draw them toward the Torah with the warmth of his personality.

Chazon Ish – these are not separate qualities, only those who love people can draw them closer to the Torah.

Rabbi Kook - I love all nations and all people and I want them to grow toward beauty and perfection.

Avos 1:13 4-7

[13] *He used to say: He who seeks renown loses his reputation; he who does not increase [his Torah learning] decreases it; he who refuses to teach [Torah] deserves death; and he who exploits the crown of Torah shall fade away.*

[יג] הוא היה אומר: נגיד שמא אבד שמה, ודלא מוסיף יסף, ודלא יליף קטלא חיב, ודאשתמש בתגא חלק.

He who seeks renown loses his reputation.

One whose good reputation is the result of self promotion rather than exemplary behavior will eventually lose that good reputation.

A rise in prominence may be the forerunner of disaster.

A position of power may “bury” one who occupies it.

Joseph died before his brothers even though he was younger than they.

He who seeks to expand the honors due him will lose even the good name he already has.

Avos 1:13:8-10

[13] *He used to say: He who seeks renown loses his reputation; he who does not increase [his Torah learning] decreases it; he who refuses to teach [Torah] deserves death; and he who exploits the crown of Torah shall fade away.*

[יג] הוא היה אומר: נגיד שמא אבד שמה, ודלא מוסיף יסף, ודלא יליף קטלא חייב, וראשתמש בתגא חלף.

He who does not increase his Torah learning decreases it.

In learning one either ascends or descends. If knowledge is not used he will eventually forget what he knows.

Life is made for growth. One who stops learning is not using life as it should be used.

One who has learned but does not want to increase his knowledge is worse than one who never learned at all.

The first rejected the beauty of Torah after experiencing it.

The second doesn't know what he is missing (Pesachim 49b).

Avots 1:13:15-17

[13] *He used to say: He who seeks renown loses his reputation; he who does not increase [his Torah learning] decreases it; he who refuses to teach [Torah] deserves death; and he who exploits the crown of Torah shall fade away.*

[יג] הוא היה אומר: נגיד שמא אבד שמה, ודלא מוסיף יסף, ודלא יליף קטלא חייב, ודאשתמש בתגא חלקא.

And he who exploits the crown (of Torah) shall fade away.

- If he uses it for personal gain by foolishly taking material reward in this world he has bartered away the eternal for the temporal.

Art Scroll p41

Avos 1:13: 11-14

[13] *He used to say: He who seeks renown loses his reputation; he who does not increase [his Torah learning] decreases it; he who refuses to teach [Torah] deserves death; and he who exploits the crown of Torah shall fade away.*

[יג] הוא היה אומר: נגיד שמא אבד שמה, ודלא מוסיף יסף, ודלא יליף
קטלא חייב, וראשתמש בתגא חלף.

He who refuses to teach is guilty.

One who selfishly refuses to share his knowledge because he wishes others to remain more ignorant than he or because it is beneath his dignity to teach inferior persons is guilty.

He cuts off spiritual sustenance to them.

He spiritually chokes them to death.

Art Scroll p41

Avos 1:14:14-17

Weiss #553

[14] *He used to say: If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And if I am for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?*

[יד] הוא היה אומר: אם אין אני לי, מי לי? וכשאני לעצמי, מה אני?
ואם לא עכשו, אימתי?

If not now, when?

Rambam – the time to acquire good traits and attributes is when you are young. It is difficult in old age to turn aside from firm dispositions.

R' Irving Bunim- the average life is like a postcard. The person does not get to the substantive message until he is almost out of room. He then writes smaller, faster and even in the margins.

Avos 1:14 1-17

[14] *He used to say: If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And if I am for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?*

[יד] הוא היה אומר: אם אין אני לי, מי לי? וכשאני לעצמי, מה אני?
ואם לא עכשו, אימתי?

He used to say, “If I am not for myself who is for me? And when I am for myself what am I?
And if not now, when?”

Rambam interprets this as an inducement to self motivation.

A person must discipline himself and control his life.

Could these ideas lead to selfishness? - No - if you have obligations you must do them if you only think of yourself what type of a person will you be and what type of a community will you be living in if everyone did the same. And don't procrastinate – the time will go by – do something with it that can make you proud of your accomplishments.

Meam Loez

If I do not take advantage of every opportunity to advance, develop and grow when will I do it?
Start now – “carpe diem”. People have free will. Your destiny is in your own hands.

If not now – when? Life is unpredictable. Do it now. You may not get to do it in your old age.
There may not be an old age.

Abarbanel p68

- Put the needs of the soul on your agenda together with your other needs.

[14] *He used to say: If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And if I am for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?*

(יד) הוא היה אומר: אם אין אני לי, מי לי? וכשאני לעצמי, מה אני? ואם לא עכשיו, אימתי?

If I am not for myself

For myself – the Mishnah refers to one's merits relative to the merits of his ancestors. A person must not rely on the Yichus of his illustrious forebearers but must create accomplishments of his own.

In fact, illustrious forebearers may serve as his condemnation. The Dubno Maggid told a parable quoted in the Art Scroll Avos:

Two young men were arrested for theft and brought before the judge. One was from a family of Rabbis and scholars and the other from a family of thieves. Who do you believe should get the more severe punishment for the same crime? - The son of Rabbis. He grew up surrounded by superb role models and should know better. The other boy might not have known better.

[14] *He used to say: If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And if I am for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?*

[יד] הוא היה אומר: אם אין אני לי, מי לי? וכשאני לעצמי, מה אני?
ואם לא עכשו, אימת?

Reordering priorities

If I am not for myself who will be for me? A person must expend the effort to succeed in spiritual matters, to elevate his relationship with God – because the fear of Heaven is not in the lands of Heaven (Berachos 33b), it is in your own personal effort.

And if I am for myself what am I? If I think that my success in business or in making a livelihood is only in my hands i.e., I am a self made man and I don't realize that those matters are in the hands of God completely, what am I? I am an ingrate and an egotist and a person likely soon to fail.

Everything is in the hands of heaven – business etc, except the fear of heaven spiritual matters. And if not how when? One must work on building his character while he is young, as he grows older he becomes set in his ways.

Do not put off for tomorrow what you could do today.

Make use of spare minutes. From the tribe of Issachar come those who knew the wisdom of time. Value the preciousness of time.

Make it happen. do it now. Focus more.

Avos 1:15:10-17

Weiss #623

[15] *Shammai says: Make your Torah study a fixed practice; say little and do much; and receive everyone with a cheerful face.*

[טו] שמאי אומר: עשה תורתך קבע. אמר מעט ועשה הרבה. והוי מקבל את כל האדם בסבר פנים יפות.

Receive every person with a cheerful countenance.

Reb Yishroel Salanter – met a person who had a gloomy countenance and confided in him his troubles. R Salanter told him, “what is in your heart is a ‘reshus hayachid’ (a private domain), what is on your face is a ‘reshus harabim’ (a public domain)”. You should always greet others with a cheerful countenance.

Avos 1:15:3-5

[15] *Shammai says: Make your Torah study a fixed practice; say little and do much; and receive everyone with a cheerful face.*

[טו] שְׁמַאי אוֹמֵר: עֲשֵׂה תוֹרָתְךָ קִבֵּעַ. אֲמַר מְעַט וַעֲשֵׂה הַרְבֵּה. וְהוּא מְקַבֵּל אֶת כָּל הָאָדָם בְּסִבְר פָּנִים יְפוֹת.

Make your Torah study a fixed practice steady – regular

Make Torah your main obligation.

Don't set aside a specific time for study and the rest of your time be Torah free.

Don't say, “when I have time I will learn”.

One's work schedule should accommodate his Torah study not vice versa.

Torah study should be like breathing – all the time.

Say little do much. Avos 1:15:6-9

Do not over commit yourself – promise less do more.

Gen 18:5 Abraham - “I will fetch a morsal of food” and he came with a banquet.

Don't announce your good intentions – just do them,.

Receive every person with a nice pleasant countenance:7-14, even if you don't have the means to accommodate all as guests. Although you are preoccupied with Torah study don't become antisocial or intellectually arrogant or show resentment if you are interrupted.

One's negative demeanor can be contagious.

A cheerful face is the greatest gift in the world.

Avos 1:15:1-2

[15] Shammai says: *Make your Torah study a fixed practice; say little and do much; and receive everyone with a cheerful face.*

[טו] שְׁמַאי אוֹמֵר: עֲשֵׂה תוֹרָתְךָ קִבֵּעַ, אֲמַר מְעַט וַעֲשֵׂה הַרְבֵּה, וְהָיִי מְקַבֵּל אֶת כָּל הָאָדָם בְּסִבֵּר פָּנִים יְפוֹת.

Shammai says:

Hillel believed Torah study was key to a person's life.

Shammai says, “study is secondary to action”. He goes out of his way to use the word ‘aseh’ “to do” and did not use the word ‘lamed’ “learn”. The performance of Mitzvot should occupy our attention even more than study.

Example:

1. Efron Gen 23:10-16 said a lot, “I will give you this field, after all what is 400 shekels of silver between me and you?” He took the money so he did little.
2. Abraham said little (Gen 18:5) and did a lot/ banquet (a morsal of bread).

Not everyone is blessed with the means to be charitable or hospitable but everyone can show a smiling face to other people.

Abarbanel 71

He who makes Torah study primary in his life will be considered primary in the world to come.

Avos 1:16:1-4

[16] *Rabban Gamliel used to say: Accept a teacher upon yourself and remove yourself from uncertainty; and do not give excess tithes by estimating [instead of measuring].*

(טז) רבן גמליאל היה אומר: עשה לך רב, והסתלק מן הספק, ואל תרבה לעשר אמדות.

1. Rabban Gamliel said: 1-4
2. make for yourself a master: 5-7
3. keep away from uncertainty: 8-10
4. do not be excessive: 11-12
5. in tithing by estimate: 13-14

-
1. Rabban Gamliel was the grandson of Hillel and the first Nasi.
 - 2 & 3 Seek consultation if you are uncertain in judging a case.
 4. Tithing Terumah is not detailed regarding the amount 1/40 is generous, normal is 1/50, stingy is 1/60. One may give Terumah by estimate but Maaser must be 10% of the entire harvest and must be precisely measured. It goes to the Levites.
 5. Don't tithe by estimate it is ok in regards to Terumah but not by Maaser.

Even if you wish to give generously estimating may occasionally be below the required amount.

Really one should never estimate. If you underestimate it is considered theft – taking from the Levite his just due.

Avoth 1:16:1-14

[16] Rabban Gamliel used to say: Accept a teacher upon yourself and remove yourself from uncertainty; and do not give excess tithes by estimating [instead of measuring].

(טז) רבן גמליאל היה אומר: עשה לך רב, והסתלק מן הספק, ואל תרבה לעשר אמדות.

1. A master – a teacher – don't choose many different teachers. The different ideas of different teachers could confuse the student.
2. Is this merely repeating what Yehoshua ben Perahyah said in Mishnah 1:6? No. In 1:6 we are advised to get a teacher for study here we are to obtain an expert – to help us know how to observe the Mitzvot accurately. Choose someone to discuss items on which you have doubt. What if you are the recognized expert in a field? You should still have a person you can go to to discuss any matter you are in doubt about. Avos 1:6 refers to a teacher for theoretical study here he is a master in matters of Halachah.
3. Improper tithing
Theft – of what belongs to the Levite if we do it improperly.
Terumah – laws are violated if Levite does not give proper amount to the Cohen.
Eating Maaser by an Israelite is a great violation. Eating it outside prescribed boundaries is also a violation.
- 4&5 – are examples of keeping away from uncertainty. In measurements you can “be sure”.
3. If you study alone you will have many questions and doubts. Study with another person – someone else's input will resolve your doubts.

Avos 1:17:1-14

[17] *Shimon his son says: All my days I have been raised among the Sages and I found nothing better for oneself than silence; not study, but practice is the main thing; and one who talks excessively brings on sin.*

[ח] 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.

1. His son Shimon said: 1-3
2. all my life I grew up among the sages: 4-8
3. and I have not found: 9-10
4. anything better for the body than silence: 11-14

He is not called Rabbi since he stated these ideas prior to assuming the post of Nasi.

1. Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel – one of the 10 martyrs killed by the Romans.
2. “All my life – even when I grew to be an adult and was president of the Sanhedrin I considered others to be the wise sages”. Even though he was the leader he never let others feel subservient.
3. Quiet is good for the body but when it comes to the soul for example, to study Torah, to pray, to discuss the commandments, speech is a virtue.
4. Rambam says – “the sign of a wise man is control of his tongue”. He was referring to answering those who insult or mistreat you. The best policy is not to reply and remain silent. You will avoid agitation, ulcers, stress or heart pain.

God will reduce the person who insults or quarrels as he did the moon when it was jealous of the sun.

Avos 1:17:19-25

[17] *Shimon his son says: All my days I have been raised among the Sages and I found nothing better for oneself than silence; not study, but practice is the main thing; and one who talks excessively brings on sin.*

[ח] 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.

5. but not for study:15-16
 6. but practice is the main thing:17-20
 7. Whoever speaks excessively brings about sin:21-25
4. Silence is good for the body – but not for purposes of study. Silence is not good for the soul. To study you must speak to question your teacher, to share with your colleagues. Enunciating alone helps one understand better and to retain learning better (Eruvin 44a).
- 5-6 One gets credit for study only if he lives by these studies only if he practices what he learns and what he teaches.

Mean Loez

4. The basic tenet of Judaism, “Hear O Israel” – i.e., listen be silent. - Abarbanel
6. Teach by example.
4. A silent fool is considered more wise than an overly talkative wise person.
4. Rashi - In a multitude of words there is opportunity for transgression. He who is quick to respond is bound to speak foolishly.
4. The outstanding feature of the wise is their restricted use of words.

Metsudah Pirkeh Avos

Avos 1:17:4-8

[17] *Shimon his son says: All my days I have been raised among the Sages and I found nothing better for oneself than silence; not study, but practice is the main thing; and one who talks excessively brings on sin.*

[ח] 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.

All my days I have been raised among the sages.

When in the company of scholars and sages it is wise to keep silent and try to absorb what they have to offer.

Man is given a limited number of words in this world, when he uses up the quota his life is over.

Rambam teaches us that there are 5 categories of speech:

1. Mitzvah – Torah reading – study
2. Forbidden speech - false testimony, tale bearing, cursing, foul language, disrespectful
3. Tasteless speech - idle talk, gossip
4. Worth-while speech = praising others, criticizing bad behavior in general
5. Permissible speech - business issues, domestic issues (food, budget etc)

One should not waste the power of speech on insignificant matters.

Avos 1:17:14

Weiss #289

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Silence

Whoever talks overly much brings on sin.

Eccl 5:2 - the voice of a fool comes in a multitude of words. Talking little is one of the distinctive marks of the wise.

Rambam - Commentary the Mishnah - Paucity of words is proof of noble lineage.

Malbim - The wise man will refrain from words that are not a positive contribution to the spiritual quality of life.

R Baruch Halevi Epstein - Words should be purified like in a silver smelter and weighed on a chemical balance.

R Shlomo Kluger – Not everything a person thinks can be spoken.

Not everything a person speaks can be written.

Not everything a person writes can be printed.

Avos 1:18:6-16

[18] Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel says: The world endures on three things – justice, truth, and peace, as it is said: 'Truth and the verdict of peace are you to adjudicate in your gates.'¹

(יח) רבן שמעון בן גמליאל אומר: על שלשה דברים העולם קיים – על הדין ועל האמת ועל השלום. שנאמר: „אמת ומשפט שלום שפטו בשעריכם.”¹

The world is sustained upon three things:

law

truth

peace

As distinguished from:

the world was created for three things:

Torah

Service

Deeds of kindness

Shimon HaTzadek 1:2

All three relate to justice:

law - the judge must judge truly and identify falsehood

truth - the witnesses must be truthful

peace - the litigants must accept the judgement graciously.

If not for law civilization would come to an end and only the stronger would win.

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On Justice

Importance of justice in Judaism.

Genesis 6:13 - The flood came because of the crime of - robbery.

Abraham - taught the rule of law.

Ex 18-19-16 - Jethro advised Moses regarding law and justice.

Joshua 24:25 - Joshua gave final instructions that the root and foundation of the entire Torah is law.

Shoftim - the leaders of Israel after Joshua and Judges.

Shmuel - traveled the land to judge the people.

2 Shmuel 8:15,16 - David administered justice and charity.

1 Kings - Solomon – all he asked was for an understanding heart to judge your people.

Isaiah 11:4 - will judge the destitute with righteousness.

Isaiah 1:27 - Zion will be redeemed thru justice.

Pirkei Avos

Chapter Two

Avos 2:1:1

[1] **רַבִּי** Rabbi said: Which is the proper path that a man should choose for himself? Whatever is a credit to himself and earns him the esteem of fellow men. Be as scrupulous in performing a 'minor' mitzvah as in a 'major' one, for you do not know the reward given for the respective mitzvos. Calculate the cost of a mitzvah against its reward, and the reward of a sin against its cost. Consider three things and you will not come into the grip of sin: Know what is above you — a watchful Eye, an attentive Ear and all your deeds are recorded in a Book.

[א] **רַבִּי** אומר: איזו היא דרך ישרה שיבר לו האדם? כל שהיא תפארת לעשה ותפארת לו מן האדם. והוי זהיר במצוה קלה כבחמורה, שאין אתה יודע מתן שכרן של מצות. והוי מחשב הפסד מצוה כנגד שכרה, ושכר עברה כנגד הפסדה. הסתכל בשלשה דברים, ואין אתה בא לידי עברה; דע מה למעלה ממך — עין רואה, ואוזן שומעת, וכל מעשיך בספר נכתבים.

Rebbi — or Rabbeinu Hakodosh

Rabbi Yehudah Hanasi, redacted the Mishnah, was head of the Sanhedrin, and was the greatest scholar of his time. He was a 7th generation descendent of Hillel.

He was born when Rabbi Akiva died. On the same day. He was a friend of Marcus Aurelius, the Roman Emperor.

Avos 2:1:2-8

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What path should an upright man take?

Should he:

- use his intellect to decide which activity he will be proud of, God will be proud of or other men will be proud of?
- try to judge the relative importance of the Mitzvot light, heavy, easy or severe?

No.

He should just follow the Torah.

All your actions are written in the book.

The way you should act is in the Torah.

Just do it and God will evaluate your actions with His seeing eye and His listening ear.

Avoth 2:1:3-9

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What is the proper path that a person should choose for himself?

Man has free choice and can chose an evil or a good path. Chose a proper path; extend hospitality, deal in an upright loving fashion, have mercy and compassion.

Avos 2:1:10-17

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All that is desirable for him to do it – a path that is a credit to Him and desirable to mankind.

A path that earns him esteem from mankind.

Ex: if you have two Mitzvot to do at the same time do the one that will serve mankind best.

If it is between serving God or serving man – choose man! ie Tzitzith, Tefillin, Sukkah vs charity, kind deeds, visiting the sick. Choose activities that are favorable to the doer and favorable to humanity.

Meam Loez 67

Every individual has a unique set of abilities, talents and insight, and it is with these that a person can make a contribution.

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Mitzvot that give honor

to the creator (The Oshe).

Abarbanel p85

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Be as careful with a minor commandment as with a major one.

How can we designate a Mitzvah a minor or a major one when we do not know their value?

In reality it does not say minor or major it says “light”, ‘kal’ and “heavy”, ‘chamurah’, referring to their difficulty in performance.

When we say we don't know the value of the commandments this relates only to positive commandments.

Meam Loez 70

Since the Torah does tell us the punishments for violating a negative precept:

Malkos - flogging

Keres - being cut off

Meam Loez 71

Misabide Shamayim - beth din - death penalty – Abarbanel

Avos 2:1:24-30

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For you do not know the giving of a reward for a Mitzvah. Calculate the cost of a Mitzvah against its reward.

How then can we differentiate a light from a heavy Mitzvah if you can't calculate the loss or profit from not performing or performing it?

Avos 2:1:36-39

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and the reward of a sin against its cost.

Gain or reward here refers to the temporary enjoyment one has from sin vs spiritual long term loss and the avoidance of Divine punishment.

The reward for refraining from sin is a sense of accomplishment and a sense of being in charge of your impetuous or improper impulses. You are the boss, not the slave of forces stronger than you.

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The value of a Mitzvah

The king told his servants to tend to his orchard and that he would pay more for some trees than others but would not tell them which were the more valuable thus assuring that the entire orchard would be cultivated. So it is with our Mitzvot.

We may mistakenly believe that the more frequently performed Mitzvah is less important; Mezuzeh vs Shofar, but this may not be so. Air is plentiful and we may take it for granted. Meat is less common and expensive yet we can't live without air and meat is not necessary for survival. More common and inexpensive does not mean less important.

We can't know the value of a Mitzvah but each person can place a value upon a Mitzvah. Imagine you are on your way to a business deal where you could make \$1000 and you are needed for a minyon. If you go to the minyon you have placed a value upon it of \$1000.

Lets say someone says, "I'll give you 1 million dollars to never again put on Tefillin". If you turn him down— you have valued that Mitzvah to be worth 1 million and so has the person who offered it to you!!

Avos 2:1:48-51

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Know what is above you.

God is above you i.e., in heaven. He is beyond human comprehension but he is totally aware of your actions. God knows all, sees all, hears all and records all. or – “know that which occurs above”. How God decides to deal with you - depends on you. It is a direct result of your own actions.

Avos 2:2:1-8

[2] *Rabban Gamliel, the son of Rabbi Judah HaNassi, says: Torah study is good together with an occupation, for the exertion of them both makes sin forgotten. All Torah study that is not joined with work will cease in the end, and leads to sin. All who exert themselves for the community should exert themselves for the sake of Heaven, for then the merit of the community's forefathers aids them and their righteousness endures forever. Nevertheless, as for you, I [God] will bestow upon you as great a reward as if you had accomplished it on your own.*

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

R Gambiel the son of R Yehudah HaNasi says:

The study of Torah is good but it can lead to arrogance,. However, if it is combined with Derech Eretz – the arrogance is less likely.

The study of Torah and good manners will allow a Torah scholar to correct or instruct the people in a kind considerate manner. That will result in their accepting his words, correcting their errors and stopping their improper or sinful actions. In that way sin is banished.

The study of Torah should be combined with an occupation. Don't look to the community to support you fully. With your Torah learning and a job earning a living you will be kept busy and less likely to sin – too busy to sin.

Otherwise, you may use your intellect to reap gains via questionable activities and create a Chillul Hashem.

All who work for the community must work for them in the name of Heaven and not for personal gain – not for self aggrandizement.

God counts a good thought as a good deed.

Avos 2:2:13-14

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Derech Eretz

can refer to:

- norms of society
- worldly occupation

If you only study and have no livelihood you might be tempted toward deceit, theft, desecration of Torah laws and you may associate with criminals.

Avos 2:3:1-3

[3] *Beware of rulers, for they befriend someone only for their own benefit; they act friendly when it benefits them, but they do not stand by someone in his time of need.*

[ג] הוּוּ וְהִירִין בְּרִשּׁוֹת, שְׂאִין מִקְרָבִין לוֹ לְאָדָם אֶלָּא לְצָרָה עֲצָמָן; נִרְאִין בְּאוֹהֲבֵין בְּשַׁעַת הַנְּאֻתָן, וְאִין עוֹמְדִין לוֹ לְאָדָם בְּשַׁעַת דְּחֻקוֹ.

avoid contact with the authorities.

Except for the benefit of the community

i.e., Mordechai in the royal palace.

Rabbi Yehudah Hanasi - was friendly with Emperor Antoninus.

If you work for the community it should be - for the sake of heaven.

Meam Loez p18

This is not meant to undermine the authority of government – a good ruler's actions are a reflection of the will of God. A prudent person then will rather seek the love of God than the favor of rulers.

- Metsudah

Don't accept a Rabbinical position by government appointment,
you will be beholden to the government and it might modify your decisions.
Government is likely to exploit you.

Abarbanel p101

Avos 2:3:4-10

[3] *Beware of rulers, for they befriend someone only for their own benefit; they act friendly when it benefits them, but they do not stand by someone in his time of need.*

[ג] הָיוּ זְהִירִין בְּרִשּׁוֹת, שֶׁאִין מִקְרִבִּין לוֹ לְאָדָם אֶלָּא לְצִרְךָ עֲצֻמָּן; נִרְאִין כְּאוֹהֲבִין בְּשַׁעַת הַנְּאֻתָּו, וְאִין עוֹמְדִין לוֹ לְאָדָם בְּשַׁעַת דְּחֻקּוֹ.

They befriend someone only for their own benefit.

They act friendly when it benefits them but do not stand by someone in his time of need.

Note: Joseph and Pharaoh

Note: Abarbanel financed Spain's conquests. Soon afterwards Spain banned all its Jews including Abarbanel and his family.

[4] He used to say: Treat His will as if it were your own will, so that He will treat your will as if it were His will. Nullify your will before His will, so that He will nullify the will of others before your will.

[ד] הוא היה אומר: עשה רצונו כרצונך, כדי שיעשה רצונך כרצונו.
בטל רצונך מפני רצונו, כדי שיבטל רצון אחרים מפני רצונך.

Make His will like your will so He will make your will like His will.

Nullify your will before His will so He will nullify the will of others before your will.

i.e., if you must spend money or your time or energy for an obligation placed upon you you may resent it. But if you internalize that obligation, as though it arose from your own wishes, it is much easier to comply.

Do it with free will.

- Meam Loez 79

Never consider your obligation to God as inferior to your personal obligations.

Consider your obligations to God as important as your own personal needs.

- Metsuda p48

We are advised to spend as much money, time and effort on Mitzvos as we expend on our personal pleasures.

Invest in ventures that can be expected to yield spiritual profits.

Do God's will with your own desire.

Avos 2:5:3-6

[5] Hillel said: Do not separate yourself from the community; do not believe in yourself until the day you die; do not judge your fellow until you have reached his place; do not make a statement that cannot be easily understood on the ground that it will be understood eventually; and do not say, 'When I am free I will study,' for perhaps you will not become free.

(ה) הלל אומר: אל תפרוש מן הצבור, ואל תאמין בעצמך עד יום מותך, ואל תדין את חברך עד שתגיע למקומו, ואל תאמר דבר שאי אפשר לשמוע, שסופו להשמע, ואל תאמר לכשאפנה אשנה, שקרא לא תפנה.

Don't separate yourself from the community

when they have troubles – or you will not have the merit to see the consolation of the community

i.e., he will die before his time. Pray with a minyon and recall what Mordechai said to Esther. 4:13 to 4:14 in Megillas Esther.

Be modest – have a level of anxiety even an old Kohen Gadol, Yochanan, became a heretic in his old age. Never relax your vigilance. Avos 2:5:13-19

Do not condemn another till you are in his place.

You may act no differently. He may not have the learning you used to understand the right way. When you teach, teach unambiguous teachings. Don't tell secrets, they will become known.

Don't say I will study when I am free! Avos 2:5:28-34

This is the counsel of the evil urge – you will never find time i.e., total leisure, to study Torah.

- Unify all these principles. You may separate from your community because you think you are better than they are. They sin where you would not and they don't take your advice (perhaps they don't understand you because you are not clear,) or you wish to have more time to study so you divorce yourself from the community. Don't do that.

Avos 2:5:7-12

Weiss #61

[5] Hillel said: Do not separate yourself from the community; do not believe in yourself until the day you die; do not judge your fellow until you have reached his place; do not make a statement that cannot be easily understood on the ground that it will be understood eventually; and do not say, 'When I am free I will study,' for perhaps you will not become free.

(ה) הלל אומר: אל תפרוש מן הצבור, ואל תאמין בעצמך עד יום מותך, ואל תדין את חברך עד שתגיע למקומו, ואל תאמר דבר שאי אפשר לשמוע, שסוכו להשמע. ואל תאמר לבשאפנה אשנה, שמא לא תפנה.

Do not believe in yourself until the day of your death.

R' A Twerski – everyday has its own challenges.

Do not be overconfident that you will do properly tomorrow even if you did properly today.

R Yisroel Salanter – a bird will soar higher and higher only as it vigorously beats its wings but it will begin to fall if it stops its effort. Self improvement will continue only as long as it is vigorously pursued.

Do not slacken your efforts.

Avos 2:6:4-7,8-11

[6] *He used to say: A boor cannot be fearful of sin; an unlearned person cannot be scrupulously pious; the bashful person cannot learn, and the quick, impatient person cannot teach; anyone excessively occupied in business cannot become a scholar; and in a place where there are no leaders, strive to be a leader.*

(ו) הוא קִידָּה אומֵר: אֵין בּוֹר יֵרָא חֲטָא, וְלֹא עִם הָאָרֶץ חָסִיד, וְלֹא הַבִּישָׁן לִמֵּד, וְלֹא הַקֶּפֶן מִלִּמֵּד, וְלֹא כָּל הַמְרַבֵּה בְּסַחֲוֵדָּה מַחֲבִים, וּבְמָקוֹם שֶׁאֵין אָנָשִׁים הַשְׁתַּדֵּל לִהְיוֹת אִישׁ.

A boor is not only ignorant but is also uncultured and without good manners, or good personality traits :4-7.

An unlearned person (ignoramus) has no learning but has good manners and personality traits :8-11.

4-7

A boor can never fear sin.
Ethics and morality mean nothing to him.
He does not know the difference between right and wrong.
He cannot refrain from sinning.
No spiritual growth is possible.

8-11

An ignoramus might associate with good intelligent people and may learn from them. He may thus become a sin fearing person and a good Jew, a Tzaddik, but not on the level of a ‘chasid’ “a truly pious person” i.e., on who goes even beyond the requirements – since he does not know the law, he is unlearned.

Avos 2:6:9-10, 12-14

[6] He used to say: A boor cannot be fearful of sin; an unlearned person cannot be scrupulously pious; the bashful person cannot learn, and the quick, impatient person cannot teach; anyone excessively occupied in business cannot become a scholar; and in a place where there are no leaders, strive to be a leader.

(ו) הוא הָיָה אוֹמֵר: אִין בּוֹר יִרָא חֵטָא, וְלֹא עִם הָאָרֶץ חָסִיד, וְלֹא הַבִּישָׁן לָמַד, וְלֹא הַקָּפֶּדָן מְלַמֵּד, וְלֹא כָּל הַמְרַבֵּה בְּסַחֲוֵדָה מַחֲבִים, וּבְמָקוֹם שֶׁאֵין אֲנָשִׁים הַשְׁתַּדֵּל לִהְיוֹת אִישׁ.

An AmHaaretz is a person preoccupied with business. 9-10

A bashful person cannot learn: 12-14

If he is too bashful to challenge and question his teachers and too afraid of being ridiculed for his questions he will never be able to clarify his doubts.

A quick, impatient person, 15-17, an overly particular person, cannot teach. He is intolerant and may resent when his students ask questions. He is too overbearing. His students will fear his sharp retorts. Every mistake on the part of his students elicits his anger.

Business men, even if successful, may not be wise. 18-22

They are engrossed in business and don't have time to study much. Broad knowledge not just of business is needed to be wise and to gain wisdom. Those who work hard at business believe it is by their efforts that they will succeed.

If there is a dearth of leadership don't be excessively humble step up into the leadership role. 23-28 Always strive to be a leader even to yourself, even in a place where no authority is watching you, conduct yourself with proper behavior.

Avos 2:6:23-28

Weiss #580

[6] He used to say: A boor cannot be fearful of sin; an unlearned person cannot be scrupulously pious; the bashful person cannot learn, and the quick, impatient person cannot teach; anyone excessively occupied in business cannot become a scholar; and in a place where there are no leaders, strive to be a leader.

(ו) הוא היה אומר: אין בור ירא חטא, ולא עם הארץ חסיד, ולא הבושה ללמוד, ולא הקפדן מלמד, ולא כל המרבה בסחורה מחכים, ובמקום שאין אנשים השתדל להיות איש.

In a place where there are no men, strive to be a man.

R' S R Hirsch – where the interests of the community suffer for lack of leadership it is your duty to strive to be a leader and a spokesperson. Under such circumstances reticence would be downright criminal.

Berachos 63a – Abbaye said, “however, if there is a competent leader you should not be”.

[7] *He also saw a skull floating on the water; he said to it: 'Because you drowned others, they drowned you; and those who drowned you will be drowned eventually.'*

(ז) אף הוא ראה גלגלת אחת שצפה על פני המים. אמר לה: „על דאטפת אטפוך. וסוף מטיףך יטופון.“

He also saw a skull floating on the surface of the water and spoke to it.

He recognized the head as belonging to a known bandit who had killed many people. He spoke to it as if it were alive in order to explain the system of Divine justice. Because you made others drown, others made you drown. 12-17

- Hillel was teaching that God constantly reviews and compensates people for their deeds (Haskachuh Protius) Midah K'neged Midah.
- Therefore, don't think that what happens is a coincidence it is a “Kah” incidence dictated by God.
- This is what is meant by poetic justice

- Abarbanel

- But in the end those who made you drown will also drown. If God has ordained that a person be inscribed for a violent death why is the person who carries out God's will also punished? Because he also was chosen for his task by God. He possesses characteristics that permit him to do the act that punished the other person. Perhaps he has over zealousness, excessive cruelty, personal hatred, greed – someone with these qualities will be chosen to carry out the punishment.

Avos 2:7:12-17

[7] He also saw a skull floating on the water; he said to it: 'Because you drowned others, they drowned you; and those who drowned you will be drowned eventually.'

(ז) אף הוא ראה גלגלת אחת שצפה על פני המים. אמר לה: „על דאטפת אטפוך, וסוף מטיףך יטופוך.”

If in fact the owner of the skull made others drown he should be punished. Why will those who drown him be drowned?

They should be praised instead.

That would be true if the second person was killing the first in order to carry out God's judgement but if he had his own motives i.e., to rob him – he too is punished.

To teach us not to go ourselves and kill a killer.

There are courts and judges for that task – no vigilante justice is permitted.

This should teach us that one's bad deeds come back to haunt him.

Conversely, man is always the beneficiary of his own good deeds.

Avos 2:8:1-7

[8] He used to say: The more flesh, the more worms; the more possessions, the more worry; the more wives, the more witchcraft; the more maidservants, the more lewdness; the more manservants, the more thievery. [However] the more Torah, the more life; the more study, the more wisdom; the more counsel, the more understanding; the more charity, the more peace. One who has gained a good reputation, has gained it for his own benefit; one who has gained himself Torah knowledge, has gained himself the life of the World to Come.

(ח) הוא הֵיָה אומר: מְרַבָּה בָּשָׂר, מְרַבָּה רָמָה; מְרַבָּה נָכְסִים, מְרַבָּה דְאָגָה; מְרַבָּה נָשִׁים, מְרַבָּה כְּשָׁפִים; מְרַבָּה שְׁפָחוֹת, מְרַבָּה זָמָה; מְרַבָּה עֲבָדִים, מְרַבָּה גִּזְלָה. מְרַבָּה תוֹרָה, מְרַבָּה חַיִּים; מְרַבָּה יְשִׁיבָה, מְרַבָּה חֲכָמָה; מְרַבָּה עֲצָה, מְרַבָּה תְּבוּנָה; מְרַבָּה צְדָקָה, מְרַבָּה שְׁלוֹם. קָנָה שֵׁם טוֹב, קָנָה לְעַצְמוֹ; קָנָה לוֹ דְּבָרֵי תוֹרָה, קָנָה לוֹ חַיֵּי הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא.

This Mishnah has 10 clauses – the first five refer to excesses that a person might indulge in and the unfortunate result of these excesses.

The last 5 clauses present the antidote to such indulgence.

1. - the more flesh the more worms.
 - a denunciation of gluttony – overeating and over drinking.

All excess is detrimental to human beings.

[8] *He used to say: The more flesh, the more worms; the more possessions, the more worry; the more wives, the more witchcraft; the more maidservants, the more lewdness; the more manservants, the more thievery. [However] the more Torah, the more life; the more study, the more wisdom; the more counsel, the more understanding; the more charity, the more peace. One who has gained a good reputation, has gained it for his own benefit; one who has gained himself Torah knowledge, has gained himself the life of the World to Come.*

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2. The more possessions the more worry.

The wealthy have more to lose. Property can be stolen, damaged, seized by the government, lose its value in the market. Possessions are a constant source of worry (Rashi).

3. The more a person has the more he wants – people are not satisfied with their portions. Material things make some people preoccupied.

A man came to Shul in Lublin and was welcomed by the Rabbi. After davening the man was again welcomed by the Rabbi. He asked, “Rabbi you welcomed me just an hour ago why do you welcome me again”? The Rabbi said, “I know you have business in Danzig – I could see that even though your body was here in Lublin your mind wandered off to Danzig and therefore now that you have returned it is only right that I welcome you again”.

Avos 2:8:24-27

[8] He used to say: The more flesh, the more worms; the more possessions, the more worry; the more wives, the more witchcraft; the more maidservants, the more lewdness; the more manservants, the more thievery. [However] the more Torah, the more life; the more study, the more wisdom; the more counsel, the more understanding; the more charity, the more peace. One who has gained a good reputation, has gained it for his own benefit; one who has gained himself Torah knowledge, has gained himself the life of the World to Come.

(ח) הוא היה אומר: מרבה בשר, מרבה רמה; מרבה נקסים, מרבה ראגה; מרבה נשים, מרבה כשפים; מרבה שפחות, מרבה זמה; מרבה עבדים, מרבה גזל. מרבה תורה, מרבה חיים; מרבה ישיבה, מרבה חכמה; מרבה עצה, מרבה תבונה; מרבה צדקה, מרבה שלום. קנה שם טוב, קנה לעצמו; קנה לו דברי תורה, קנה לו חיי העולם הבא.

The more Torah the more life.

Teaching Torah extends one's life – it enriches life. When you teach what you learned your teacher lives again. When your student repeats what you taught him you get great pleasure. Torah learning and teaching earns one the world to come.

The more study The more wisdom.

Increasing study refers to developing the analytical skills needed to extrapolating, plumbing the depths and reading between the lines.

Avos 2:8:32-35

[8] *He used to say: The more flesh, the more worms; the more possessions, the more worry; the more wives, the more witchcraft; the more maidservants, the more lewdness; the more manservants, the more thievery. [However] the more Torah, the more life; the more study, the more wisdom; the more counsel, the more understanding; the more charity, the more peace. One who has gained a good reputation, has gained it for his own benefit; one who has gained himself Torah knowledge, has gained himself the life of the World to Come.*

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The more counsel the more understanding Avos 2:8:32-35 get other peoples opinions.

The more charity the more peace. Avos 2:8:36-39

The poor will cry out to God – they may be envious of those who have more than they. Share with them and avoid their anger and jealousy.

One who has gained a good name. Avos 2:8:40-44

A good reputation lasts forever – unlike material wealth.

One who has gained Torah knowledge has gained the World to Come. Avos 2:8:45-53

Avos 2:9:11-21

[9] Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai received the tradition from Hillel and Shammai. He used to say: If you have studied much Torah, do not take credit for yourself, because that is what you were created to do.

[ט] רבן יוחנן בן זכאי קבל מיהלל ומשמאי. הוא היה אומר: אם למדת תורה הרבה, אל תחזיק טובה לעצמך, כי לך נוצרת.

If you have studied much Torah don't take credit that is what you were created for.

God created the world for us – we are to study Torah. If people study Torah the world can exist if not the world has no reason for existing.

- If one studies it is no great accomplishment it is required of him.

Much like a person who repays a debt – he should get no special credit for that.

We can see that the human being is composed of 248 major parts and 365 nerves paralleling the 613 Mitzvot of the Torah.

Another idea – if you teach Torah to students don't expect a reward you were created for that.

If you have been able to accomplish much in Torah learning do not have pride – you were created with the capacity to learn and recall. Besides study is not the main thing – performance is.

- Everything on earth performs its function as God created it why therefore should man take pride in performing as he is supposed to?

Avos 2:9:19-21

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That is what you were created for.

The 613 Mitzvot parallel the parts of the body and by performing a Mitzvah it perfects and improves the corresponding part. That is why Moshe yearned to enter the Holy land. Some of the Mitzvot which are of an agricultural nature can only be performed there. Even though he was not required to perform those Mitzvot outside the land he wanted to do them so as to perfect himself more completely.

Avos 2:10:1-10

[10] *Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai had five [primary] disciples. They were: Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrkanos, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chanania, Rabbi Yose the Kohen, Rabbi Shimon ben Nesanel, and Rabbi Elazar ben Arach.*

וְיָחֲזִיק חֲמִשָּׁה תַּלְמִידִים הָיוּ לוֹ לְרַבֵּן יוֹחָנָן בֶּן זַכַּאי, וְאֵלֵּיּוּ הֵן: רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר בֶּן הֵרֶקְנוֹס, רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻעַ בֶּן חַנְנִיָּא, רַבִּי יוֹסִי הַכֹּהֵן, רַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן נְתַנְאֵל, וְרַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן עֲרֵךְ.

Rabbainu Yochanon ben Zakai had many students. There were so many that his lectures had to be given outdoors No study hall was large enough.

Rabbi Eliezar ben Hyrkanos: 11-14

- entered adulthood unlettered and ignorant.
- became an accomplished scholar.

Took ben Zakai to his meeting with Vespasian.

Rabbi Yehoshuah ben Chanania 15-17 was a Levite in the choir of the Bais HaMikdash.

Famous sayings: - “The Torah is not in Heaven”

- “Live at peace with the Romans” ostrich/lion story. Art Scroll p91

Rabbi Yose the Kohen:18-20

studied esoteric Torah the Maaseh HaMerkavah.

Only one ruling of his is noted in (Rosh Hashanah 17b).

Rabbi Shiman ben Nesanel: 21-24

Rabbi Elazar ben Aruch: 25-28

After the fall of Jerusalem he did not move to Yavneh but to a resort town Amaos and without colleagues to study he forgot all his Torah learning.

Avos 4:18 exile yourself in a place of Torah and do not assume it will come after you.

It is your colleagues who cause it to remain with you.

Avos 2:11:1-4

[11] *He used to enumerate their praises: Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrkanos is like a cemented cistern that loses not a drop; Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chanania, praiseworthy is she who bore him; Rabbi Yose the Kohen is a scrupulously pious person; Rabbi Shimon ben Nesanel fears sin; and Rabbi Elazar ben Arach is like a spring flowing stronger and stronger.*

[יא] הוא הִזָּה מוֹנֶה שְׁבָחָן: רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר בֶּן הֶרְקָנוֹס, בּוֹר סוּד שְׁאִינוֹ מֵאֲבֵד טֶפֶה; רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן חֲנַנְיָא, אֲשֶׁרִי יוֹלְדָתוֹ; רַבִּי יוֹסִי הַכֹּהֵן, חֲסִיד; רַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן נְתַנְאֵל, יֵרָא חֲטָא; וְרַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר בֶּן עֲרַךְ, כַּמְעַן הַמְתַּגְבֵּר.

He, Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai would enumerate their praises.

Teachers can speak glowingly about their students as can parents about their children without jealousy.

He praised their virtues in order for other students to be inspired and try to emulate them.

Eliezar ben Hyrkanos – is like a cemented cistern: 5-13.

He had a capacity to remember all that he learned, he never forgot anything – not even a drop (Rashi, R Yonah, Rav). A person only remembers that which made a deep impression on him. Also if repeated and reviewed his studies incessantly he would not forget them.

The vital bodily functions such as breathing are never forgotten.

Torah was linked to the essence of his life something impossible to forget and that is why he remembered so well.

In distinction to a cistern his learning did not become stale but was constantly renewed and added to by fresh learning.

Yehoshua ben Chanania - Praiseworthy is she who bore him 14-18. When his mother was pregnant she went daily to the study hall and after he was born she took him in his crib to the study hall to have his ears filled with words of Torah.

Avos 2:11:20-23

[11] *He used to enumerate their praises: Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrkanos is like a cemented cistern that loses not a drop; Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chanania, praiseworthy is she who bore him; Rabbi Yose the Kohen is a scrupulously pious person; Rabbi Shimon ben Nesanel fears sin; and Rabbi Elazar ben Arach is like a spring flowing stronger and stronger.*

(יא) הוא היה מונה שבחן: רבי אליעזר בן הרקנוס, בור סוד שאינו מאבד טפה; רבי יהושע בן חנניא, אשרי יולדתו; רבי יוסי הכהן, חסיד; רבי שמעון בן נתנאל, ירא חטא; ורבי אלעזר בן עזריה, כמעין המתגבר.

Rabbi Yoise HaKohen is a chasid: 20-23

Chasid means scrupulously honest and righteous,

One who performs all his tasks for the sake of Heaven.

Rabbi Shimon ben Netanel: 24-29

feared sin (or) feared deficiency – not because he feared punishment for the deficiency but because he did not want to disappoint his father in Heaven.

Rabbi Elazar ben Aruch: 30-35

is like a spring flowing stronger and stronger words of wisdom poured out of him in torrents, like a rushing stream .

[12] He used to say: If all the sages of Israel were on one pan of a balance-scale, and Eliezer ben Hyrkanos were on the other, he would outweigh them all. Abba Shaul said in his name: If all the sages of Israel, with even Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrkanos among them, were on one pan of the balance-scale, and Rabbi Elazar ben Arach were on the other, he would outweigh them all.

[יב] הוא הָיָה אוֹמֵר: אִם יִהְיוּ כָּל חֲכָמֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּכַף מֵאֲזֵנִים, וְאֶלְעִזָּר בֶּן הֶרְקֵנוֹס בְּכַף שְׁנִיָּה, מְכַרִּיעַ אֶת כָּלָם. אָבָא שָׁאוּל אוֹמֵר מִשְׁמוֹ: אִם יִהְיוּ כָּל חֲכָמֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּכַף מֵאֲזֵנִים, וְרַבִּי אֶלְעִזָּר בֶּן הֶרְקֵנוֹס אֶף עִמָּהֶם, וְרַבִּי אֶלְעִזָּר בֶּן עֶרֶךְ בְּכַף שְׁנִיָּה, מְכַרִּיעַ אֶת כָּלָם.

Which is better?

1. a sage who mastered all the subject matter
i.e., R Eliezer ben Hyrkanos:11-13
2. or a sage who can perform great feats of intellectual creative insights like
R Elazer ben Aruch?: 30-32

R Yochanean ben Zakkai chose #1

Abba Shaul chose #2 19-20

This discussion i.e., weighing sages of Israel on a scale, teaches as that the majority does not rule in Judaism. We don't decide by polling the various sages. A determination must be made of the relative caliber of those who give their opinions.

Avos 2:13:3-4

[13] He said to them: Go out and discern which is the proper way to which a man should cling. Rabbi Eliezer says: A good eye. Rabbi Yehoshua says:

(וג) אָמַר לָהֶם: צֵאוּ וּרְאוּ אִיזוֹ הִיא דֶּרֶךְ טוֹבָה שֶׁיִּדְבֹּק בָּהּ הָאָדָם. רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר אוֹמֵר: עֵין טוֹבָה. רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻעַ אוֹמֵר: חֵבֵר טוֹב. רַבִּי יוֹסִי

go out and see (learn discipline).

R Yochanan ben Zakkai ordered his 5 disciples to go out of the protected environment of the Yeshiva. “Go out into the world, put yourself in the place of ordinary people outside of your special exalted position and prescribe a purposeful life course for the common man”. Why? The qualities of a Torah Scholar may be different from the common man.

Envy is generally bad – except in Torah studies where you use it to excel and accomplish. Being content with your portion is good – except in Torah studies where you must strive for even more knowledge and understanding.

Avos 2:13

[13] *He said to them: Go out and discern which is the proper way to which a man should cling. Rabbi Eliezer says: A good eye. Rabbi Yehoshua says: A good friend. Rabbi Yose says: A good neighbor. Rabbi Shimon says: One who considers the outcome of a deed. Rabbi Elazar says: A good heart. He [Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai] said to them: I prefer the words of Elazar ben Arach to your words, for your words are included in his words.*

[יג] אָמַר לָהֶם: צֵאוּ וְרִאוּ אִיזוֹ הִיא דֶּרֶךְ טוֹבָה שִׁדְכָק בָּהּ הָאָדָם. רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר אוֹמֵר: עֵין טוֹבָה. רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻעַ אוֹמֵר: חֵבֵר טוֹב. רַבִּי יוֹסֵי אוֹמֵר: שָׁכֵן טוֹב. רַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן אוֹמֵר: הִרְוָאָה אֶת הַנּוֹלֵד. רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר אוֹמֵר: לֵב טוֹב. אָמַר לָהֶם: רְוֵאָה אֲנִי אֶת דְּבָרֵי אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן עֶרְךָ מִדְּבָרֵיכֶם, שֶׁבְּכֻלָּל דְּבָרָיו דְּבָרֵיכֶם.

Is it better to have one exceptional trait i.e., be a specialist or to have partial competence in multiple areas?

R Eliezar a good eye – charitable and benevolent attitude toward others.

R Yehoshua a good friend - to give you constructive criticism.

- to be a compatible spouse you must be a good friend.

R Yose a good neighbor – you can learn from him and you will be on good behavior knowing he may be observing you.

R Yonah – the proper path is to be a good neighbor not merely to have one.

How? – practice acts of kindness.

R Shimon – visualize the consequence of an action – predict the future from what happened in the past in similar circumstances.

R Elazar - a good heart – Be patient with people. Contain your anger. Be content with your lot in life.

- Your words are included in his – everything in life is dependent on a good heart don't be consumed by jealousy, be happy in the success of other people.

[14] *He said to them: Go out and discern which is the evil path from which a man should distance himself. Rabbi Eliezer says: An evil eye. Rabbi Yehoshua says: A wicked friend. Rabbi Yose says: A wicked neighbor. Rabbi Shimon says: One who borrows and does not repay; one who borrows from man is like one who borrows from the Omnipresent, as it is said: 'The wicked one borrows and does not repay, but the Righteous One is gracious and gives.'*¹ *Rabbi Elazar said: A wicked heart. He [Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai] said to them: I prefer the words of Elazar ben Arach to your words, for your words are included in his words.*

(יוד) אָמַר לָהֶם: צֵאוּ וְרֹאוּ אִיזוֹ הַדֶּרֶךְ רָעָה שִׁיתְרַחֵק מִמֶּנָּה הָאָדָם.
רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר אוֹמֵר: עֵין רָעָה. רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻעַ אוֹמֵר: חֵבֵר רָע. רַבִּי יוֹסִי
אוֹמֵר: שָׁכֵן רָע. רַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן אוֹמֵר: הִלּוּה וְאִינוּ מְשַׁלֵּם. אֶחָד הִלּוּה מִן
הָאָדָם כָּלוּה מִן הַמָּקוֹם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: „לֹוֹה רָשָׁע וְלֹא יִשְׁלֵם, וְצָדִיק חוֹנֵן
וְנוֹתֵן.” רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר אוֹמֵר: לֵב רָע. אָמַר לָהֶם: רוֹאֵה אֲנִי אֶת דְּבָרֵי
אֱלִיעֶזֶר בֶּן עֶרֶךְ מִדְּבָרֵיכֶם, שֶׁכֻּלָּל דְּבָרֵיו דְּבָרֵיכֶם.

What is the evil path from which a man should distance himself?

R Eliezer – an evil eye, pursuit of luxuries, miserliness, selfishness, jealousy, constant dissatisfaction, imputing bad motives to others.

R Yehoshua – being a bad friend to others.

R Yose – a wicked neighbor – a bad role model, one must keep a distance from wicked persons.

R Shimon – borrowing and not paying back – This is a counterpart of his statement about acting with an eye toward future consequences is evil.

Think of your borrowing from man as though you borrowed from God!

It is that important that you pay back what you took.

R Elazar – a wicked heart – takes revenge, bears a grudge. You ask your friend for a favor and he refuses you – next day he asks you for the same favor you are supposed to grant it to him!!

R Yochanan ben Zakkai – prefers the words of R Elazar for it contains all the others. A wicked heart will spread worse decay in the person and in society.

Avos 2:17:10-16
Weiss #195

[17] Rabbi Yose says: (a) Let your fellow's money be as dear to you as your own; (b) apply yourself to study Torah, for it is not yours by inheritance; and (c) let all your deeds be for the sake of Heaven.

(ח) רבי יוסי אומר: יהי קמון חברך חביב עליך כשלך: והתקן עצמך
ללמוד תורה. שאינה ירשה לך: וכל מעשיך יהיו לשם שמים.

Prepare yourself to study Torah it does not come to you by inheritance.

Megillah 6b – If one says, “I have not worked but I have found”, do not believe him.
Torah is not obtained without effort.

Meiri – even if your ancestors were scholars do not say, “This is second nature to me
for me a little study will suffice”. It is not your inheritance.

Meam Loez - prepare yourself – means with fear of Heaven, piety and derech eretz
(proper conduct).

Avos 2:17:18-22
Weiss #310

[17] Rabbi Yose says: (a) Let your fellow's money be as dear to you as your own; (b) apply yourself to study Torah, for it is not yours by inheritance; and (c) let all your deeds be for the sake of Heaven.

(ח) רבי יוסי אומר: יהי ממון חבֵרְךָ חביב עליך כשלך; והתקן עצמך ללמוד תורה. שאינה ירשה לך; וכל מעשיך יהיו לשם שמים.

all your deeds should be for the sake of Heaven.

Rambam – one's intentions in all activities should be for the health of the body to serve the soul to achieve knowledge and moral virtues so it can come closer to God.

R' S.R. Hirsch – Even the good we do loses much of its value if we do not do it from a pure and God oriented sense of duty.

Prov 3:6 – Have your mind directed to God in all your ways and he will direct your path.

[18] Rabbi Shimon says: (a) *Be meticulous in reading the Shema and in prayer;*
 (b) *when you pray, do not make your prayer a set routine, but rather [beg for] compassion and supplication before the Omnipresent, as it is said: 'For He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in kindness, and relentful of punishment';² and (c) do not judge yourself to be a wicked person.*

(יח) רבי שמעון אומר: הוי זהיר בקריאת שמע ובתפלה: וכשאתה מתפלל, אל תעש תפלתך קבע, אלא רחמים ותחנונים לפני המקום. שנאמר: „כי חנון ורחום הוא ארך אפים ורב חסד ונחם על הרעה“²; ואל תהי רשע בפני עצמך.

Do not be wicked in your own presence.

- Don't decide that you are too wicked to be forgiven by God.
 Repent immediately no matter how grave your sin.
- Do not be wicked – in your own presence alone, separated from the community – that is defined as wicked, - don't do that.
- Don't be wicked thinking you are alone in your own presence – God is everywhere and knows your actions.
- Do not be wicked in your own presence – for if you are not afraid to be wicked before your own soul you will not be ashamed before the Divine presence.

Meam Loez 115-116

- A person should not consider himself so incorrigible and perverted that he feels there is no sense in praying to God because it will be of no value – God is full of compassion and is ready to forgive. Abarbanel

A negative self image may prevent a person from doing good.

Avos 2:19:4-7

[19] Rabbi Elazar says: (a) Be diligent in the study of Torah and know what to answer a heretic; (b) know before Whom you toil; and (c) know that your Employer can be relied upon to pay you the wage of your labor.

(יט) רבי אלעזר אומר: הוי שקור ללמוד תורה, ודע מה שתשיב לאסיקורוס: ודע לפני מי אתה עמל; ונאמן הוא בעל מלאכתך. שישלם לך שכר פעלתך.

Be eager to learn Torah.

- To have knowledge – to know what is permitted and what is forbidden.
Know each (+) and each (-) commandment and continue to study to know the fine points.
- Diligence will result in success.

Meam Loez 116

Abarbanel 143

Avos 2:19:8-11

[19] Rabbi Elazar says: (a) Be diligent in the study of Torah and know what to answer a heretic; (b) know before Whom you toil; and (c) know that your Employer can be relied upon to pay you the wage of your labor.

(יט) רבי אלעזר אומר: הוי שקוד ללמוד תורה, ודע מה שתשיב לאסיקורוס: ודע לפני מי אתה עמל: ונאמן הוא בעל מלאכתך. שישלם לך שכר פעלתך.

Know how to answer a heretic: 8-11

(an Apikores from the word, ‘hephker’, “ownerless” - i.e., the world has no owner and the Torah no originator).

He is not owned and owes nothing to a higher power.

Also an epicurian (Epicurus - Greek) advocated narcissistic pursuit of pleasure.

He believed that there is no heaven or hell to modify man’s behavior.

Avos 2:19:4-11

[19] Rabbi Elazar says: (a) Be diligent in the study of Torah and know what to answer a heretic; (b) know before Whom you toil; and (c) know that your Employer can be relied upon to pay you the wage of your labor.

(וט) רבי אלעזר אומר: הוי שקוד ללמוד תורה, ודע מה שתשיב לאסיקורוס: ודע לפני מי אתה עמל; ונאמן הוא בעל מלאכתך.
שישלם לך שכר פעלתך.

Know what to answer the non-believer

by studying the non-legal sections of the Talmud and the Midrashim.

In order to know what to answer the non-believer you must know how to answer him.

Avos 2:19:12-16

[19] Rabbi Elazar says: (a) Be diligent in the study of Torah and know what to answer a heretic; (b) know before Whom you toil; and (c) know that your Employer can be relied upon to pay you the wage of your labor.

(וט) רבי אלעזר אומר: הוי שקוד ללמוד תורה, ודע מה שתשיב
לאסיקורוס: ודע לפני מי אתה עמל; ונאמן הוא בעל מלאכתך.
שישלם לך שכר פעלתך.

Know before whom you toil

When you discuss the Torah with a heretic exercise caution lest he should convince you of his opinions.

Therefore, know before whom you stand. Meam Loez 116

Though diligent Torah study is difficult, if it is done for sake of Heaven it is especially worthwhile.

Study diligently in depth and refresh your learning frequently so your memory is good.

Know what to answer a heretic: 8-11 – if you have studied properly you have penetrated beyond the surface of the law and can explain its significance beyond only faith and tradition. If you understand it deeply you will be able to withstand any challenge.

Know before whom you do it:12-16 – since the Torah is God's creation no question can shake your belief. Questions can only make you realize that you don't fully understand and encourage you to study more.

Your employer (God) can be relied upon to provide you just rewards for your efforts :11-24

Avos 2:20:1-3

[20] Rabbi Tarfon says: The day is short, the task is abundant, the laborers are lazy, the wage is great, and the Master of the house is insistent.

(כ) רבי טרפון אומר: היום קצר, והמלאכה מרובה, והפועלים עצלים, והשכר הרבה, ובעל הבית דוחק.

Rabbi Tarfan says – (R Akiva was his student) “had we been members of the Sanhedrin we would never have administered capital punishment”.

The day is short: 4-5 - life is short.

- a short time in which to gather treasures.
- Give a groom a watch as a present – time is more valuable than gold.

The task is great: 6-7

The laborers are lazy: 8-9 – man must overcome his natural laziness. Pure willpower can overcome natural laziness. A man can have the strength to lift a car to save a child to lift a beam to escape the flames – pure willpower can do it – you can do it.

The reward is great: 10-11 – even if we can’t accomplish everything we set out to achieve we are rewarded greatly for whatever do.

And the master is insistent: 12-14– God wants each of us to succeed.

Avos 2:20:4-7

Weiss #625

[20] Rabbi Tarfon says: The day is short, the task is abundant, the laborers are lazy, the wage is great, and the Master of the house is insistent.

(כ) רבי טרפון אומר: היום קצר, והמלאכה מרובה, והפועלים עצלים, והשכר הרבה, וכעל הבית דוחק.

The day is short and the load is large.

R' S.R. Hirsch – life is short and the task each individual must complete on earth is great, yet people are slow to complete their work.

R' Dov Katz – R' Yisroel Salanter walked past a shoemakers house and saw him working by the light of a candle that was almost dying out. When asked why he still worked so late the shoemaker said, “as long as the candle keeps burning, one can still make repairs”. A good lesson for life.

Pirkei Avos

Chapter 3

Avos 3:1:13-15

[1] **עֲקִבְיָא** Akavia ben Mahalalel said: Consider three things and you will not come into the grip of sin: Know whence you came, whither you go, and before Whom you will give justification and reckoning. 'Whence you came?' – from a putrid drop; 'whither you go?' – to a place of dust, worms and maggots; 'and before Whom you will give justification and reckoning?' – before the King Who reigns over kings, the Holy One, Blessed is He.

(א) **עֲקִבְיָא** בן מהללאל אומר: הסתכל בשלשה דברים ואין אתה בא לידי עברה: דע מאין באת, ולאן אתה הולך, ולפני מי אתה עתיד לתן דין וחשבון. מאין באת? מטפה סרוחה. ולאן אתה הולך? למקום עפר, רמה ותולעה. ולפני מי אתה עתיד לתן דין וחשבון? לפני מלך מלכי המלכים, הקדוש ברוך הוא.

- Know from where you come:13-15

- from an image of God.

You come from a most holy place – your soul comes from God's throne of Glory. Since the soul is such a precious gem you must be careful not to contaminate it.

- Your soul is a portion of the Divine from on high.

Avos 3:1:30-34

[1] **עַקְבִּיָּא** Akavia ben Mahalalel said: Consider three things and you will not come into the grip of sin: Know whence you came, whither you go, and before Whom you will give justification and reckoning. 'Whence you came?' – from a putrid drop; 'whither you go?' – to a place of dust, worms and maggots; 'and before Whom you will give justification and reckoning?' – before the King Who reigns over kings, the Holy One, Blessed is He.

(א) **עַקְבִּיָּא** בן מהללאל אומר: הסתכל בשלשה דברים ואין אתה בא לידי עברה: דע מאין באת, ולאן אתה הולך, ולפני מי אתה עתיד לתן דין וחשבון. מאין באת? מטפה סרוחה. ולאן אתה הולך? למקום עפר, רמה ותולעה. ולפני מי אתה עתיד לתן דין וחשבון? לפני מלך מלכי המלכים, הקדוש ברוך הוא.

Know to where you are going to a place of dust?

No, our soul has to return to the Throne of Glory, the holy place from which it originated. We must keep it pure and not change it or sully it so it can easily return to its place of honor.

Avos 3:1:42-43

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judgement and a reckoning

It should be first a reckoning i.e., an analysis and then the judgement.

But in heaven it works differently.

You are confronted with your sins and you recite the known punishments for them according to the laws of the Torah.

Then God makes His calculations.

Then you get punished.

Avos 3:1:5-12

[1] **עֲקִיבָא** Akavia ben Mahalalel said: Consider three things and you will not come into the grip of sin: Know whence you came, whither you go, and before Whom you will give justification and reckoning. 'Whence you came?' – from a putrid drop; 'whither you go?' – to a place of dust, worms and maggots; 'and before Whom you will give justification and reckoning?' – before the King Who reigns over kings, the Holy One, Blessed is He.

(א) **עֲקִיבָא** בן מהללאל אומר: הסתכל בשלשה דברים ואין אתה בא לידי עברה: דע מאין באת, ולאן אתה הולך, ולפני מי אתה עתיד לתן דין וחשבון. מאין באת? מטפה סרוחה. ולאן אתה הולך? למקום עפר, רמה ותולעה. ולפני מי אתה עתיד לתן דין וחשבון? לפני מלך מלכי המלכים, הקדוש ברוך הוא.

In the first chapter of Pirkei Avos – Shimon HaZaddik tells us that the world stands on three pillars – Torah, Avodah and Gemilut Chasadim; Torah, service and kindness.

The second chapter debates what is necessary for a Jew to live a proper life; an occupation, study of Torah, avoidance of authorities, be part of a community don't procrastinate, be a good friend, increase Torah wisdom and counsel, charity, good name, - accentuate the (+) and a Jew has a good life.

Chapter 3 Akavya adds not only must you perform the Mitzvot 'aseh' you also have to avoid the negative traps that might lead you to evil. The pitfalls of sin are always present.

The antidote for the temptation to sin is to contemplate what Akavya suggests.

Avos 3:1:5-12

[1] **עַקְבִּיָּא** Akavia ben Mahalalel said: Consider three things and you will not come into the grip of sin: Know whence you came, whither you go, and before Whom you will give justification and reckoning. 'Whence you came?' – from a putrid drop; 'whither you go?' – to a place of dust, worms and maggots; 'and before Whom you will give justification and reckoning?' – before the King Who reigns over kings, the Holy One, Blessed is He.

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Consider three things and you will not come to sin.

Know from whence you came – a spark of the Divine.

Whether you are going – your soul returns to the Divine enchanced by your good deeds.

Before whom you will give justification and reckoning. A person's life is so significant that every move must be reported to the creator. Never consider yourself as an unimportant being – be aware of your nobility.

Avos 3:2:6-10

[2] Rabbi Chanina, the deputy Kohen Gadol [High Priest], says: Pray for the welfare of the government, because if people did not fear it, a person would swallow his fellow alive.

(ב) רבי חנינא סגן הכהנים אומר: הוי מתפלל בשלומה של מלכות, שאלמלא מורא, איש את רעהו חיים בלעו.

Pray for the welfare of the government.

- The 70 bullocks offered in the Temple on Succos is one example of Jewish service on behalf of the nations (Rashi).
- This is the source for the custom of offering a prayer on behalf of the government during the Sabbath services.
- It is a call for Jews to take an interest in public issues.
- One must not confine one's prayers to personal issues but should pray for the welfare of all men, including the government, to assure peace and tranquility.

Legislators can function without scholars but scholars connect function without political stability, therefore, pray for the government.

Avos 3:3:6-15

[3] Rabbi Chanina ben Tradyon says: If two sit together and there are no words of Torah between them, it is a session of scorners, as it is said: 'In the session of scorners he does not sit.'³ But if two sit together and words of Torah are between them, the Divine Presence rests between them, as it is said: 'Then those who fear HASHEM spoke to one another, and HASHEM listened and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear HASHEM and give thought to His Name.'⁴ From this verse we would know this only about two people; how do we know that if even one person sits and occupies himself with Torah the Holy One, Blessed is He, determines a reward for him?

[ג] רבי חנינא בן תרדיון אומר: שנים שיושבין ואין ביניהם דברי תורה, הרי זה מושב לצים, שנאמר: „ובמושב לצים לא ישב“. י אכל שנים שיושבין ויש ביניהם דברי תורה, שכינה שרויה ביניהם, שנאמר: „אז נדברו יראי יהוה איש אל רעהו, ויקשב יהוה וישמע, ויכתב ספר וברון לפניו, ליראי יהוה ולחשבי שמו.“⁴ אין לי אלא שנים: מנין שאפילו אחד שיושב ועוסק בתורה, שהקדוש ברוך הוא קובע לו שכר? שנאמר: „ישב בדרך וידם, כי נטל עליו.“¹

If two people sit together and there are no words of Torah it is a session of frivolities

and implies contempt and scorn for the Torah. Make every minute count.

Torah should be brought into all areas of our lives. Every topic or circumstance can stimulate a reference to Torah. All of one's activities should earn some spiritual profit. A spiritual vacuum will quickly be filled sometimes with the worst of sins.

Avos 3:3:21-30

[3] Rabbi Chanina ben Tradyon says: If two sit together and there are no words of Torah between them, it is a session of scorners, as it is said: 'In the session of scorners he does not sit.'³ But if two sit together and words of Torah are between them, the Divine Presence rests between them, as it is said: 'Then those who fear HASHEM spoke to one another, and HASHEM listened and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear HASHEM and give thought to His Name.'⁴ From this verse we would know this only about two people; how do we know that if even one person sits and occupies himself with Torah the Holy One, Blessed is He, determines a reward for him? For it is said: 'Let one sit in solitude and be still, for he will have received [a reward] for it.'¹

[ג] רבי חנינא בן תרדיון אומר: שנים שיושבין ואין ביניהם דברי תורה, הרי זה מושב לצים, שנאמר: „ובמושב לצים לא ישב.“³ אבל שנים שיושבין ויש ביניהם דברי תורה, שכינה שרויה ביניהם, שנאמר: „אז נדברו יראי יהוה איש אל רעהו, ויקשב יהוה וישמע, ויכתב ספר וברון לפניו, ליראי יהוה ולחשבי שמו.“⁴ אין לי אלא שנים: מנין שאפילו אחד שיושב ועוסק בתורה, שהקדוש ברוך הוא קובע לו שכר? שנאמר: „ישב בדרך וידם, כי נטל עליו.“¹

But if two sit together and words of Torah are between them then the Divine presence rests between them.

If one sits and learns he also has the Divine presence. The difference is that the Torah of two people is recorded since the intellectual give and take will generally result in a correct halachic application. The two people exchange words verbally, audibly. When only one studies he is occupied with learning words but the words do not become expressed nor are made audible.

[4] Rabbi Shimon said: If three have eaten at the same table and have not spoken words of Torah there, it is as if they have eaten of offerings to the dead idols, as it is said: 'For all tables are full of vomit and filth, without the Omnipresent.'² But if three have eaten at the same table and have spoken words of Torah there, it is as if they have eaten from the table of the Omnipresent, as it is said: 'And he said to me, "This is the table that is before HASHEM."³

[ד] רבי שמעון אומר: שלשה שאכלו על שלחן אחד ולא אמרו עליו דברי תורה, כאלו אכלו מזבחי מתים, שנאמר: „כי כל שלחנות מלאו קיא צואה, בלי מקום”²; אבל שלשה שאכלו על שלחן אחד ואמרו עליו דברי תורה, כאלו אכלו משלחנו של מקום, שנאמר: „וידבר אלי, זה השלחן אשר לפני יהוה.”³

If three have eaten at the same table and have not spoken words of Torah there it is as if they have eaten offerings to dead idols.

An entire group that shows disrespect for the Torah is very bad.

The Birkat HaMazon can fulfill that need for Torah. The first blessing is composed by Moses and represents the five books of Moses. The second blessing written by Joshua symbolizes the books of the prophets and the third blessing authored by King David represents the writings. However, it is laudatory to also engage in Torah study or conversation in addition to the Birkat.

Eating is good for the body, Torah is food for the soul. Man may legitimately kill animals or destroy vegetation for his own consumption only if he has risen above them by employing man's unique endowment; the power of speech. By speaking words of Torah man elevates the food he eats and gives it new life and meaning.

Avos 3:5:6-7

[ה] רבי חנינא בן חכיןאי אומר: הַנֶּעוֹר בַּלַּיְלָה, וְהַמְהַלֵּךְ בַּדֶּרֶךְ יַחֲדִיד, וּמִפְנֵה לִבּוֹ לְבִטְלָה — הָרִי זֶה מִתְחַיֵּב בְּנַפְשׁוֹ.
[5] Rabbi Chanina ben Chachinai says: One who stays awake at night or who travels alone on the road, but turns his heart to idleness — indeed, he bears guilt for his soul.

One who stays awake at night

Night is ideally suited for spiritual pursuits and one who does not do so is derelict.
Most of man's intellectual achievements occur at night, therefore, don't waste time in excessive sleeping, eating, drinking or idle talk at night.
This is a directive to get sufficient rest and sleep so you can function well at night.

Avos 3:5:11-13

[ה] רבי חנינא בן חכניאי אומר: הַנֶּעוֹר בַּלַּיְלָה, וְהַמְהַלֵּךְ בַּדֶּרֶךְ יַחֲדִי, וּמִפְנֵה לְבוֹ לְבָטָלָה — הֲרִי זֶה מִתְחַיֵּב בְּנַפְשׁוֹ.
[5] Rabbi Chanina ben Chachinai says: One who stays awake at night or who travels alone on the road, but turns his heart to idleness — indeed, he bears guilt for his soul.

But turns his heart to idleness

i.e., squanders the quiet hours that could be used for spiritual growth.

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Avos 3:5:14-17

[5] Rabbi Chanina ben Chachinai says: One who stays awake at night or who travels alone on the road, but turns his heart to idleness – indeed, he bears guilt for his soul.

[ה] רבי חנינא בן חכיןאי אומר: הַנֶּעוֹר בַּלַּיְלָה, וְהַמְהַלֵּךְ בַּדֶּרֶךְ יַחֲדִי, וּמִפְנֵה לִבּוֹ לְבָטָלָה – הֲרִי זֶה מִתְחַיֵּב בְּנַפְשׁוֹ.

Indeed, he bears guilt for his soul.

He is morally guilty for wasting that opportunity.

Awake – but not learning.

Alone – but not occupied.

Idle because he turned his heart to idleness – are all self induced negatives and such a person has no one to blame but himself .

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[6] Rabbi Nechunia ben Hakanah says: If someone takes upon himself the yoke of Torah – the yoke of government and the yoke of worldly responsibilities are removed from him. But if someone throws off the yoke of Torah from himself – the yoke of government and the yoke of worldly responsibilities are placed upon him.

[ו] 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.

Whoever takes upon himself the yoke of Torah will have the yoke of Government
(and of worldly cares) removed from him.

Rav J B Soloveitchik – Bondage to God is all encompassing and by definition releases man from all other ties and bonds.

The yoke of Torah and the respect and fear of God can supercede all the lesser fears of man. People fear sickness, loss of wealth or status, loss of things in general. These fears are the cause of anxiety and mental illnesses that beset mankind. All these lesser fears can be wiped out by a fear of God. The yoke of government and of worldly cares can be removed.

Avot 3:6:6-17

[6] Rabbi Nechunia ben Hakanah says: If someone takes upon himself the yoke of Torah – the yoke of government and the yoke of worldly responsibilities are removed from him. But if someone throws off the yoke of Torah from himself – the yoke of government and the yoke of worldly responsibilities are placed upon him.

[ו] רבי נחוניא בן הקנה אומר: כל המקבל עליו על תורה, מעבירין ממנו על מלכות ועל דרך ארץ; וכל הפורק ממנו על תורה, נוטלין עליו על מלכות ועל דרך ארץ.

When a man accepts upon himself

the yoke of Torah – the “yoke of government”, ‘ol malchus’ and the yoke of derech eretz are removed from him.

Proof: The tribe of Levi in Egypt were devoted to Torah study and were therefore freed from the duties of slavery.

Torah Scholar: God will provide his sustenance – free of daily tasks. Torah Student: free from military duty. - Meam Loez

You will not have uncertainty about your “purpose in life” – your ‘derech’.

You will not feel God’s requests are burdensome – you will understand them.

Other anxieties will fade away as you are absorbed in learning. - Abarbanel

A person who studies Torah will not feel pressured by the burdens imposed upon him by government or everyday life – he will bear them cheerfully since his life is filled with so much satisfaction.

God needs loyal soldiers. If one does not serve in His army he will serve in somebody else’s army - Metsudah

Avos 3:7:9-15

[7] *Rabbi Chalafta ben Dosa of Kfar Chanania says: If ten people sit together and engage in Torah study, the Divine Presence rests among them, as it is said: 'God stands in the assembly of God.'*⁴ *How do we know this even of five? For it is said: 'He has established His bundle upon earth.'*⁵ *How do we know this even of three? For it is said: 'In the midst of judges He shall judge.'*⁶ *How do we know this even of two? For it is said: 'Then those who fear HASHEM spoke to one another, and HASHEM listened and heard.'*⁷ *How do we know this even of one? For it is said: 'In every place where I cause My Name to be mentioned, I will come to you and bless you.'*⁸

[ז] רבי חלפתא בן דוסא איש כפר חנניא אומר: עשרה שיושבין ועוסקין בתורה, שכינה שרויה ביניהם, שנאמר: „אלהים נצב בעדת אל.”⁴ ומנין אפילו חמשה? שנאמר: „ואגדתו על ארץ יסדה.”⁵ ומנין אפילו שלשה? שנאמר: „בקרב אלהים ישפט.”⁶ ומנין אפילו שנים? שנאמר: „אז נדברו יראי יהוה איש אל רעהו ויקשב יהוה וישמע.”⁷ ומנין אפילו אחד? שנאמר: „בכל המקום אשר אזכיר את שמי, אבוא אליך וברכתך.”⁸

If 10 people are present and study Torah the Divine presence is present among them.

This is true for 5, for 3, for two and even for one.

If even a single individual merits the Divine presence when he is engaged in Torah study why does the Mishnah mention groups of 2,3,5 and 10?

The more people who join in the performance of a good deed the greater is the cumulative value. Think of a diamond:

If a one caret diamond is worth 1000.

A two caret diamond is worth 3000.

A three carat diamond is worth 7000.

A five carat diamond is worth 30,000.

The value increases disproportionate to the increase in size. So too a large group performing good deeds have a greater value.

Avos 3:8:6-11

[8] Rabbi Elazar of Bartosa says: Give Him from His Own, for you and your possessions are His. And so has David said, 'For everything is from You, and from Your Own we have given You.'⁹

[ח] רבי אלעזר איש ברתותא אומר: תן לו משלו, שאתה ושלך שלו; וכן בדין הוא אומר: „בי ממך הכל, ומידך נתנו לך.”⁹

Give Him from His own, for you and your possessions are His.

When a person gives charity he should not feel as though he is giving of his own possessions as the evil influence might argue. You are not distributing your earnings – you are on ‘eved hashem’ a “slave to God”, and all that a slave earns belongs to his master.

You are a child of God and all that a child earns belongs to his father. You are merely returning what belongs to its rightful owner.

Furthermore, God need not be grateful to a person who gives charity he is only returning what he had on deposit. If it would not be returned it would be like stealing.

However, in God’s mercy He does consider it as a good deed.

[ט] רבי יעקב אומר: המהלך בדרך ושונה, ומפסיק ממשנתו, ואומר: „מה נאה אילן זה! ומה נאה גיר זה!“ – מעלה עליו הכתוב כאילו מתחייב בנפשו.

[9] Rabbi Yaakov said: One who walks on the road while reviewing [a Torah lesson] but interrupts his review and exclaims, 'How beautiful is this tree! How beautiful is this plowed field!' – Scripture considers it as if he bears guilt for his soul.

An interruption in learning – scripture considers it as if he bears guilt for his soul.

Learning is so important that interrupting it even to appreciate man's improvement upon nature (a plowed field) or God's handiwork (in creating a beautiful tree) by nature, should not be done – it endangers a person's life (likely in the world to come).

Notice that in comparison to learning – even praising God is considered not as valuable a use of your time.

Avos 3:10:9-13

[10] Rabbi Dostai bar Yannai says in the name of Rabbi Meir: Whoever forgets anything of his Torah learning, Scripture considers it as if he bears guilt for his soul, for it is said: 'But beware and guard your soul exceedingly lest you forget the things your eyes have seen.'¹ Does this apply even if [he forgot because] his studies were too difficult for him? [This is not so, for] Scripture says, 'And lest they be removed from your heart all the days of your life.'¹ Thus, one does not bear guilt for his soul unless he sits [idly] and [through lack of concentration and review] removes them from his consciousness.

[נו] רבי דוסתאי בר ינאי משום רבי מאיר אומר: כל השוכח דבר אחד ממשנתו, מעלה עליו הכתוב כאלו מתחייב בנפשו, שנאמר: „רק השמר לך, ושמר נפשך מאד, פן תשכח את הדברים אשר ראו עיניך.“¹ יכול אפילו תקפה עליו משנתו? תלמוד לומר: „ופן יסורו מלבבך כל ימי חייך“; הא אינו מתחייב בנפשו עד שישוב ויסירם מלבו.

Whoever forgets his learning

Rav, R'Yonah - Constant review is the key to retaining one's knowledge.

Shulchan Aruch - A person with a memory span of no more than 30 days must review his studies every 30 days rather than proceed with new material.

We are commanded not to forget even though to forget is an involuntary function. The counter-acting voluntary function of reviewing so as to remember, is the corollary activity.

A person transgresses if he fails to review – but if he forgets his learning due to sickness or age he is not culpable.

Also by frequent review new insights are seen in old material.

The Torah reveals itself to those who seek its secrets.

How can we remember our studies? Once learned do you forget how to eat etc? No, because your life depends upon it. If you wish to remember that which your life depends upon, you will review and know and recall.

If you forsake your learning for a day - it will forsake you for two. Art Scroll p156

[10] Rabbi Dostai bar Yannai says in the name of Rabbi Meir: *Whoever forgets anything of his Torah learning, Scripture considers it as if he bears guilt for his soul, for it is said: 'But beware and guard your soul exceedingly lest you forget the things your eyes have seen.'*¹ Does this apply even if [he forgot because] his studies were too difficult for him? [This is not so, for] Scripture says, 'And lest they be removed from your heart all the days of your life.'¹ Thus, one does not bear guilt for his soul unless he sits [idly] and [through lack of concentration and review] removes them from his consciousness.

[ו] רבי דוסתאי בר ינאי משום רבי מאיר אומר: כל השוכח דבר אחד ממשנתו, מעלה עליו הכתוב כאלו מתחייב בנפשו, שנאמר: ,רק השמר לך, ושמר נפשך מאד, פן תשכח את הדברים אשר ראו עיניך.¹ יכול אפילו תקפה עליו משנתו? תלמוד לומר: „ופן יסורו מלבבך כל ימי חייך“; הא אינו מתחייב בנפשו עד שישב ויסירם מלבו.

Whoever forgets one word of study is regarded by scripture as having forfeited his soul.

Deut 4:9 “Take heed of yourself and guard your soul diligently lest you forget the things which your eyes have seen and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life.”

Manachos 99b - whoever forgets transgresses a negative commandment.

But forgetting indicates he had no intention to forget why is he liable?

We judge that he did have such an intention if he did not take precautions against forgetting which is to review on a regular basis.

Avos 3:11:6-12

[11] Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa says: Anyone whose fear of sin takes priority over his wisdom, his wisdom will endure; but anyone whose wisdom takes priority over his fear of sin, his wisdom will not endure.

(יא) רבי חנינא בן דוסא אומר: כל שיראת חטאו קודמת לחכמתו, חכמתו מתקיימת; וכל שחכמתו קודמת ליראת חטאו, אין חכמתו מתקיימת.

Fear of Sin takes precedence over wisdom.

Psalms 111:10 - “The beginning of wisdom is the fear of God”. Art Scroll p159

Fear of sin should be our goal.

Torah knowledge is the means to achieve fear and therefore we should reach that goal.

Learning should have a goal and that goal is enough.

Knowledge to love, revere and fear God.

Wisdom without fear of sin is like a building without a foundation.

A wise person who lacks fear of sin is like a craftsman without tools.

One who is fearful of sin but lacks wisdom possesses the tools but lacks the skill to use them.

A wise person who is fearful of sin has the tools and knows how to use them.

Avos 3:11:13-20

[11] Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa says: *Anyone whose fear of sin takes priority over his wisdom, his wisdom will endure; but anyone whose wisdom takes priority over his fear of sin, his wisdom will not endure.*

(יא) רבי חנינא בן דוסא אומר: כל שיראת חטאו קודמת לחכמתו, חכמתו מתקיימת; וכל שחכמתו קודמת ליראת חטאו, אין חכמתו מתקיימת.

If wisdom takes precedent over his fear of sin his wisdom will not endure.

Knowledge is not an end in itself – Torah is an applied science which is meant to be carried into practice and not be mere theory.

Art Scroll p159

Avos 3:12:4-9

[12] He used to say: Anyone whose good deeds exceed his wisdom, his wisdom will endure; but anyone whose wisdom exceeds his good deeds, his wisdom will not endure.

[יוב] הוא היה אומר: כל שמעשיו מרבין מחכמתו, חכמתו מתקיימת; וכל שחכמתו מרבה ממעשיו, אין חכמתו מתקיימת.

Anyone whose good deeds exceed his wisdom – his wisdom will endure.

This Mishnah emphasises good deeds the previous Mishnah warned us about bad deeds.

Good deeds should be done even over and above the demands of the law and over and above our perceptions of what is required of us. In areas of doubt, do the good thing. Even if you don't understand the rationale of a Mitzvah, perform the Mitzvah. One's actions for good must exceed the limits of one's understanding.

‘Naaseh V’Nishma’ – “we will do and later learn about it”. Action is more valuable than knowledge. We put the arm Tefillin on first (action first) and then the head Tefillin (knowledge later) and always leave the arm Tefillin on until the head Tefillin is off. Ideas and wisdom are only valuable if they translate into action.

Actions speak louder than words and are louder than knowledge.

Avos 3:12:10-16

[12] He used to say: Anyone whose good deeds exceed his wisdom, his wisdom will endure; but anyone whose wisdom exceeds his good deeds, his wisdom will not endure.

[יוב] הוא היה אומר: כל שמעשיו מרבין מחכמתו, חכמתו מתקיימת; וכל שחכמתו מרבה ממעשיו, אין חכמתו מתקיימת.

But anyone whose wisdom exceeds his good deeds – his wisdom will not endure

A person who does not allow his studies to shape his conduct:

Would be better not to study.

His knowledge serves as an indictment – since ignorance can no longer be claimed for his failures.

He sows but does not reap.

If a person only fulfills the commandments that he thinks he understands, he uses his wisdom to limit his religious commitment.

Only wisdom attained through toil and activity endures. That which is the result of inborn talent can be easily lost.

People excel in younger grades because of innate ability but because they were not forced to concentrate and develop good study habits they may be surpassed by classmates with less ability but better study habits. Art Scroll p162

Avos 3:13:4-12

[13] *He used to say: If the spirit of one's fellows is pleased with him, the spirit of the Omnipresent is pleased with him; but if the spirit of one's fellows is not pleased with him, the spirit of the Omnipresent is not pleased with him.* (יג) הוא היה אומר: כל שרוח הבריות נוחה הימנו, רוח המקום נוחה הימנו; וכל שאין רוח הבריות נוחה הימנו, אין רוח המקום נוחה הימנו.

If one's fellows are pleased with him, the spirit of the Omnipresent is pleased with him.

Rashi:

A person beloved on earth is certainly beloved in Heaven.

A person who is pleasant and honest sanctifies God's name he also pleases God's children.

God is pleased when man brings joy to his children.

A father is pleased when his children are caused to rejoice.

Avos 3:13:13-23

[13] *He used to say: If the spirit of one's fellows is pleased with him, the spirit of the Omnipresent is pleased with him; but if the spirit of one's fellows is not pleased with him, the spirit of the Omnipresent is not pleased with him.* [וג] הוא ה' אומר: כל שרוח הבריות נוחה הימנו, רוח המקום נוחה הימנו; וכל שאין רוח הבריות נוחה הימנו, אין רוח המקום נוחה הימנו.

But if the spirit of one's fellows is not pleased with him then the spirit of the Omnipresent is not pleased with him.

Deficiency between people is more serious than deficiency against God because one cannot atone on Yom Kipper for sins against one's fellow man.

Pleasing man is a form of pleasing God.

Avos 3:14:1-5

[14] Rabbi Dosa ben Harkinas said: *Late morning sleep, midday wine, children's chatter, and sitting in the assemblies of the ignorant, remove a man from the world.* רבי דוסא בן הרכינס אומר: שנה של שחרית, ויין של צהרים, ושיחת הילדים, ושיבת בתי כנסיות של עמי הארץ — מוציאין את האדם מן העולם.

Rabbi Dosa ben Harkinas said:

there are things that appear innocuous yet are very detrimental since they waste time and deter man from his main mission in life.

Avos 3:14:6-8

[14] Rabbi Dosa ben Harkinas said: Late morning sleep, midday wine, children's chatter, and sitting in the assemblies of the ignorant, remove a man from the world. [יד] רבי דוסא בן הרכינס אומר: שנה של שחרית, ויין של צהרים, ושיחת הילדים, ושיבת בתי כנסיות של עמי הארץ — מוציאין את האדם מן העולם.

A person who sleeps late in the morning

misses Shul.

He misses the right time to say Shema and the Amidah.

A person should actually rise early and study.

Time is our most precious possession and not to use it fully one is guilty of blasphemy. Excessive sleep is the beginning of human downfall.

Art Scroll p165

Avos 3:14:9-11

[14] *Rabbi Dosa ben Harkinas said: Late morning sleep, midday wine, children's chatter, and sitting in the assemblies of the ignorant, remove a man from the world.*

(יד) רבי דוסא בן הרכינס אומר: שנה של שחרית, ויין של צהרים, ושיחת הילדים, ושיבת בתי כנסיות של עמי הארץ — מוציאין את האדם מן העולם.

Drinking wine in the afternoon: 9-11

A person should be productive not somnolent, in the afternoon. Wine promotes the attitude that life is nothing more than a party.

Avos 3:14:12-13

[14] Rabbi Dosa ben Harkinas said: Late morning sleep, midday wine, children's chatter, and sitting in the assemblies of the ignorant, remove a man from the world. [יד] רבי דוסא בן הרכינס אומר: שנה של שחרית, ויין של צהרים, ושיחת הילדים, וישיבת בתי כנסיות של עמי הארץ – מוציאין את האדם מן העולם.

Acting immaturely: 12-13

Childish banter – not using the tools God gave him to study Torah.

God endows man with hands to give charity, eyes to see only the good, feet to walk in the ways of God and a mouth to speak words of Torah to explain and to teach.

Avos 3:14:14-19

[14] Rabbi Dosa ben Harkinas said: Late morning sleep, midday wine, children's chatter, and sitting in the assemblies of the ignorant, remove a man from the world.

(יד) רבי דוסא בן הרכינס אומר: שנה של שחרית, ויין של צהרים, ושיחת הילדים, ושיבת בתי כנסיות של עמי הארץ — מוציאין את האדם מן העולם.

Spending time with people ignorant of Torah: 14-19

is a waste of your time. Light discussion with learned persons on a dignified basis is of value but not with ignorant persons.

Avos 3:14:20-24

[14] Rabbi Dosa ben Harkinas said: Late morning sleep, midday wine, children's chatter, and sitting in the assemblies of the ignorant, remove a man from the world. ויד רבי דוסא בן הרכינס אומר: שנה של שחרית, ויין של צהרים, ושיחת הילדים, ושיבת בתי כנסיות של עמי הארץ – מוציאין את האדם מן העולם.

Drive a man from the world: 20-24

i.e., shorten his life and deny him Olam Habbah.

Life is an investment opportunity – make use of your resource – time/health/optimism.

Art Scroll Siddur p560

Avoth 3:14:1-5

[14] *Rabbi Dosa ben Harkinas said: Late morning sleep, midday wine, children's chatter, and sitting in the assemblies of the ignorant, remove a man from the world.* [יד] רבי דוסא בן הרכינס אומר: שנה של שחרית, ויין של צהרים, ושיחת הילדים, ושיבת בתי כנסיות של עמי הארץ – מוציאין את האדם מן העולם.

The admonitions of Rabbi Dosa can refer to the three parts of the day.

morning he sleeps and misses Shacharit.

noon he drinks.

evening he wastes time even if in Shul.

He does not permit himself to be elevated by the prayer services designed for each part of the day – that's the great loss.

Services designed for each part of the day – are like three parts of a man's life.

Morning – early age – don't sleep thru it. It is a time to set a foundation for the rest of your life.

You should have a dream. - Abarbanel 184

You should have a grand goal in your life – but you will not achieve it unless you are awake alert and active. - Metsuda

- Meam Loez

Afternoon- be alert, sober, dedicated to values and accomplishments.

Evening – maturity, don't idle away the precious time that is left to you.

Avos 3:15:5-7

[15] Rabbi Elazar the Moda'ite said: One who desecrates sacred things, who disgraces the Festivals, who humiliates his fellow in public, who nullifies the covenant of our forefather Abraham, or who perverts the Torah contrary to the halachah — though he may have Torah and good deeds, he has no share in the World to Come.

(טו) רבי אלעזר המודעי אומר: המחלל את הקדשים, והמבזה את המועדות, והמלבין פני חברו ברבים, והמפר בריתו של אברהם אבינו, והמגלה פנים בתורה שלא כהלכה, אף על פי שיש בידו תורה ומעשים טובים — אין לו חלק לעולם הבא.

One who desecrates sacred things.

Refers to Temple offerings and the specific restrictions as to their consumption.

Misappropriates property to the Temple.

A Kohen who coerces people to give him the priestly offering.

One who does not show proper respect to the Torah Scholar.

One who does not believe in his own potential to achieve a life of sanctity.

Avos 3:15:8-10

[15] *Rabbi Elazar the Moda'ite said: One who desecrates sacred things, who disgraces the Festivals, who humiliates his fellow in public, who nullifies the covenant of our forefather Abraham, or who perverts the Torah contrary to the halachah – though he may have Torah and good deeds, he has no share in the World to Come.*

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Who disgraces the festivals

by not refraining from labor – by not spending more on food and clothes for his family.

The festival commemorates God's power i.e., to take us from Egypt and give us the Torah. Disregard of the festivals suggests he denies the miracles of God and that is considered a denial of God and therefore idolatry.

Art Scroll p168

[15] *Rabbi Elazar the Moda'ite said: One who desecrates sacred things, who disgraces the Festivals, who humiliates his fellow in public, who nullifies the covenant of our forefather Abraham, or who perverts the Torah contrary to the halachah — though he may have Torah and good deeds, he has no share in the World to Come.*

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Who humiliates his fellow in public

makes his friend's face turn to white in embarrassment. This is likened to murder. Draining the blood from his face is tantamount to actually spilling his blood. It includes one who gains honor at another's expense or refers to another with a demeaning nickname.

Only a person who does not believe that man is created in God's image could humiliate a person publically. To do so is considered denial of God.

Avos 3:15:15-19

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Who nullifies the covenant of Abraham

Circumcision is a physical mark of national identity. Whoever refuses to circumcise himself or his son nullifies the covenant God made with Abraham and his children. Abraham sits at the gates of Gehinnom and does not allow any circumcised Jew to enter – it is protection.

Art Scroll p170

Avos 3:15:20-24

[15] *Rabbi Elazar the Moda'ite said: One who desecrates sacred things, who disgraces the Festivals, who humiliates his fellow in public, who nullifies the covenant of our forefather Abraham, or who perverts the Torah contrary to the halachah – though he may have Torah and good deeds, he has no share in the World to Come.*

[טו] רבי אלעזר המודעי אומר: המחלל את הקדשים, והמכזב את המועדות, והמלבין פני חברו ברבים, והמפר בריתו של אברהם אבינו, והמגלה פנים בתורה שלא כהלכה, אף על פי שיש בידו תורה ומעשים טובים – אין לו חלק לעולם הבא.

Who perverts the meaning of the Torah -

i.e., acts not according to halachah i.e., interprets the law contrary to halachah (Rashi). The phrase ‘Megaleh panim’ means reveals a face or a facet. The Torah, according to Bamidbar Rabbah 13:15 has ‘Aiyin Panim’, 70 faces, meaning 70 interpretive approaches. This person dreamt up a new one that is not consistent with recognized halachah.

Avos 3:15:25-37

[15] *Rabbi Elazar the Moda'ite said: One who desecrates sacred things, who disgraces the Festivals, who humiliates his fellow in public, who nullifies the covenant of our forefather Abraham, or who perverts the Torah contrary to the halachah — though he may have Torah and good deeds, he has no share in the World to Come.*

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Though he may have Torah and good deeds he has no share in the world to come.

These violations can nullify a person's good deeds Torah study and a lifetime of Torah observance because they suggest heretical tendencies that go to the fundamental basis of Judaism. Only true reorientation and repentance can rescue him from the fatal effects of heresy.

Avos 3:16:1-3

[16] Rabbi Yishmael said: Be yielding to a superior, pleasant to the young, and receive every person cheerfully.

[טז] רבי ישמעאל אומר: הָיִי קָל לְרֹאשׁ, וְנוֹחַ לְתַשְׁחֶרֶת, וְהָיִי מְקַבֵּל אֶת כָּל הָאָדָם בְּשִׂמְחָה.

Rabbi Yishmoel says:

He codified the 13 hermeneutical principles for Biblical Interpretation.

Art Scroll p173

[16] Rabbi Yishmael said: Be yielding to a superior, pleasant to the young, and receive every person cheerfully.

[טז] רבי ישמעאל אומר: הוי קל לראש, ונוח לתשחרת, והוי מקבל את כל האדם בשמחה.

Be yielding to a superior

Rambam - Exhibit subservience when in the presence of people of stature.

Rav, Rashi - Be submissive in your relationship with God.

Rashi, R'Yonah - Be submissive to those in government.

R Mishe Alshokar - The word 'Rosh' comes from – 'laasos ratzon Avicha Shebasamayim' - RAS

“do the will of your father in Heaven”.

Avos 3:16:7-8

[16] Rabbi Yishmael said: Be yielding to a superior, pleasant to the young, and receive every person cheerfully.

[טז] רבי ישמעאל אומר: הוי קל לראש, ונוח לתשחרת, והוי מקבל את כל האדם בשמחה.

Be pleasant to the young

act kindly to your juniors.

Art Scroll p174

Avos 3:16:9-14

[טז] רבי ישמעאל אומר: הוי קל לראש, ונוח לתשחרת, והוי מקבל את כל האדם בשמחה.

(16) Rabbi Yishmael said: Be yielding to a superior, pleasant to the young, and receive every person cheerfully.

And receive every person cheerfully (with joy and happiness).

Speak pleasantly to all people young and old alike.

Be kind to those who need your help and make them feel that they instead are helping you. And if you are unable to help them say so pleasantly with regret-you would like to help but unfortunately you cannot do so.

Art Scroll p174

Avos 3:16:9-14

Weiss #161

[16] *Rabbi Yishmael said: Be yielding to a superior, pleasant to the young, and receive every person cheerfully.*

[טז] רבי ישמעאל אומר: הוי קל לראש, ונוח לתשחרת, והוי מקבל את כל האדם בשמחה.

Receive all men happily.

Whether they are small or great, free or slave, every sort of person.

A cheerful countenance is an external expression of our inward feeling.

Whoever gives charity to a poor person in a surly manner and gloomy face has lost all the merit of his action.

Avos 3:17:1-3

[17] Rabbi Akiva said: Mockery and levity accustom a man to immorality. The transmitted Oral Torah is a protective fence around the Torah; tithes are a protective fence for wealth; vows are a protective fence for abstinence; a protective fence for wisdom is silence.

(ו) רבי עקיבא אומר: שחוק וקלות ראש מרגילין את האדם לערוה. מסורת סג לתורה; מעשרות סג לעשר; נדרים סג לפרישות; סג לחכמה שתוקה.

Rabbi Akiva says

He came from humble beginnings. (Berachos 27b)

He greeted his wife after 24 years of study and told his students “my Torah and yours are hers”. (Kesubos 62b-63a1)

Talmudic opinions Sanhedrin 86a

His name is mentioned 564 times in the Talmud.

His 2400 students died for not showing each other respect (Yevamos 62b).

He used water to wash rather than to drink (Eruvin 21b).

He died reciting the Shema (Berachos 61B).

Avos 3:17:4-10

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מסורת סיג לתורה; מעשרות סיג לעשר; נדרים סיג לפרישות; סיג
לחכמה שתיקה.

Mockery and Levity (- sechok v'kalos rosh - sheker = untruths accustom a person to immorality.

R' Yonah - A refined seriousness and fear of God is the best deterrent to such behavior.

This Mishnah tells us the moral consequences of such behavior. Subsequent phrases offer protection of virtues.

Avos 3:17:11-13

[17] Rabbi Akiva said: Mockery and levity accustom a man to immorality. The transmitted Oral Torah is a protective fence around the Torah; tithes are a protective fence for wealth; vows are a protective fence for abstinence; a protective fence for wisdom is silence.

(יז) רבי עקיבא אומר: שחוק וקלות ראש מרגילין את האדם לערוה. מסורת סג לתורה; מעשרות סג לעשר; נדרים סג לפרישות; סג לחכמה שתוקה.

The transmitted oral law (i.e., the Talmud) is a protective fence around the Torah.

The Talmud allows us to interpret the Torah properly and to derive halachah from the Torah. Just as one erects a fence around his vineyard so outsiders can't trespass so the oral tradition safeguards the Torah so others can't misinterpret it. The word Masorah is from the word 'asur', to bind, or fence our tradition to protect it.

Avos 3:17:14-16

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(ח) רבי עקיבא אומר: שחוק וקלות ראש מרגילין את האדם לערוה. מסורת סג לתורה; מעשרות סג לעשר; נדרים סג לפרישות; סג לחכמה שתיקה.

Tithes are a protective fence for wealth.

Contributions and tithes make a person:

1. appreciate the benefit that money can do.
2. appreciate who is the true owner of all wealth.
3. obtain even greater wealth ‘Aser Tiaser’ “Tithe you shall tithe”, Deut, 14:22, has been homiletically expounded as ‘Aser ‘Bishveel Shetisaser’, “give tithes so you will become wealthy”.

Avos 3:17:17-19

[17] Rabbi Akiva said: Mockery and levity accustom a man to immorality. The transmitted Oral Torah is a protective fence around the Torah; tithes are a protective fence for wealth; vows are a protective fence for abstinence; a protective fence for wisdom is silence.

(יז) רבי עקיבא אומר: שחוק וקלות ראש מרגילין את האדם לערוה. מסורת סג לחוריה; מעשרות סג לעשר; נדרים סג לפרישות; סג לחכמה שתיקה.

Vows are a protective fence for abstinence.

Vows aid one's self control and self restraint. As this ability grows stronger a person finds it easier to refrain from forbidden pleasures (Rambam).

The golden mean is the objective – yet if one finds himself inclined too far to an extreme a vow may help him right the balance.

A minimum of 30 days is needed to change one's habits – that is why a nazir's vow must be for at least 30 days. We learn this from Numbers 6:5, 'kadosh yehiyeh', "he will be holy", the numerical value of 'yehiyeh' is 30. Suggesting 30 days.

yud – 10, Heh – 5, yud 10, heh -5 = 30

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(ח) רבי עקיבא אומר: שחוק וקלות ראש מרגילין את האדם לערוה. מסורת סג לתורה; מעשרות סג לעשר; נדרים סג לפרישות; סג לחכמה שתיקה.

A protective fence for wisdom is silence.

Silence from slander, tale bearing, gossip and foul language.

But speak out when you are studying - learn “out loud”.

Even a silent fool is considered wise. Solomon Proverbs 17:28.

A wise person:

1. refrains from speaking in the presence of those wiser or older than he.
2. He does not interrupt others.
3. He does not offer an opinion about things with which he is unfamiliar.
4. He is not quick to answer.

Silence does not lead to wisdom but the appearance of wisdom is protected by limiting one's speech.

Since we have 2 ears and one mouth we should listen twice as much as we speak.

[17] Rabbi Akiva said: Mockery and levity accustom a man to immorality. The transmitted Oral Torah is a protective fence around the Torah; tithes are a protective fence for wealth; vows are a protective fence for abstinence; a protective fence for wisdom is silence.

(יח) רבי עקיבא אומר: שחוק וקלות ראש מרגילין את האדם לערוה. מסורת סג לתורה; מעשרות סג לעשר; נדרים סג לפרישות; סג לחכמה שתיקה.

A hedge around wisdom is silence.

Comments about the benefits of silence:

Avos 1:17 “I have grown up among the sages and I have found the best medicine for the body is silence”.

Megillah 18a - silence is conducive to spiritual and physical health.

Moed Katan 18a - a covenant has been made with the lips.

One should be extremely careful with the way he expresses himself (nothing unkosher should go in and nothing unkosher should go out).

Hullin 89a - what should a person strive for in the world? That he make himself as though he was mute.

[18] *He used to say: Beloved is man, for he was created in God's image; it is indicative of a greater love that it was made known to him that he was created in God's image, as it is said: 'For in the image of God He made man.'*¹ *Beloved are the people Israel, for they are described as children of the Omnipresent; it is indicative of a greater love that it was made known to them that they are described as children of the Omnipresent, as it is said: 'You are children to HASHEM Your God.'*² *Beloved are the people Israel, for a cherished utensil was given to them; it is indicative of a greater love that it was made known to them that they were given a cherished utensil, as it is said: 'For I have given you a good teaching; do not forsake My Torah.'*³

(יוח) הוא הָיָה אוֹמֵר: חֲבִיב אָדָם שֶׁנִּבְרָא בְּצֶלֶם; חֶבֶה יִתְּרָה נֹדַעַת לוֹ שֶׁנִּבְרָא בְּצֶלֶם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: „כִּי בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים עָשָׂה אֶת הָאָדָם.”¹ חֲבִיבֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, שֶׁנִּקְרְאוּ בָּנִים לְמָקוֹם; חֶבֶה יִתְּרָה נֹדַעַת לָהֶם שֶׁנִּקְרְאוּ בָּנִים לְמָקוֹם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: „בָּנִים אַתֶּם לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם.”² חֲבִיבֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, שֶׁנֶּתַּן לָהֶם כְּלֵי חֲמֻדָּה; חֶבֶה יִתְּרָה נֹדַעַת לָהֶם, שֶׁנֶּתַּן לָהֶם כְּלֵי חֲמֻדָּה, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: „כִּי לָקַח טוֹב נָתַתִּי לָכֶם, תּוֹרַתִּי אֶל תַּעֲזוּבוּ.”³

Beloved is man for he was made in God's image.

In Gen 1:27 it says, “and God created man in His own image”. This suggests the power of God to create as He wills.

In Gen 9:6 - “whoever sheds blood of man by man shall his blood be shed for in the image of God did he make man”. This suggests the value and dignity of man that he may not be injured with impunity.

Rav Nossan Zvi Finkel - and therefore man is obligated to treat his fellow man with kindness for by doing so he honors God. He must be careful not to embarrass or abuse another person for by doing so he is slighting God.

Avos 3:19:1-3

[19] *Everything is foreseen, yet the freedom of choice is given. The world is judged with goodness, and everything depends on the abundance of good deeds.*

וְהַכֹּל לְפִי רֹב
וְהָרְשׁוֹת נְתוּנָה. וּבטוֹב הָעוֹלָם נִדּוֹן, וְהַכֹּל לְפִי רֹב
הַמַּעֲשֵׂה.

Everything is foreseen – yet the freedom of choice is given.

Rambam – all of man's actions past and future are known to God.

He is aware how man will act before man is even confronted with the need or opportunity to act.

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Avos 3:19:4-5

[19] Everything is foreseen, yet the freedom of choice is given. The world is judged with goodness, and everything depends on the abundance of good deeds. [ויט] הכל צפוי, והרשות נתונה. ובטוב העולם נדון, והכל לפי רוב המעשה.

Yet, the freedom of choice is given.

Rashi, Rav, Rambam - Man is not forced to act in the way he does.

God's advance knowledge in no way affects man's choice.

Deut 30:19 - man must choose, as it says, "I have placed life and death before you blessing and curse; that you shall choose life".

How can these two truths coexist – God knows what you will choose yet you have full freedom to make your choice?

Tosofos Yom Tov - This is because God is not bound by time. He can "see" what happened and what will happen. Better say, "He "knows what happened and what will happen". It is all in the "present" for Him.

Avos 3:19:5-7

[19] Everything is foreseen, yet the freedom of choice is given. The world is judged with goodness, and everything depends on the abundance of good deeds.

[יט] הכל צפוי, והרשות נתונה. ובטוב העולם נדון, והכל לפי רוב המעשה.

The world is judged with goodness.

R' Yonah - He does judge us with mercy – not strict justice.

Meiri - Also any punishment he metes out to us is for good. To improve us/and or the world and give us the opportunity to repent.

But the evil deed has already been done how can repentance undo it? God deems the intent to do the evil act as the person's main sin and repentance can change that for the future. Of course, a person must “pay” for the damage he has done to people or things with his evil act.

Avos 3:19:8-11

[19] *Everything is foreseen, yet the freedom of choice is given. The world is judged with goodness, and everything depends on the abundance of good deeds.*

(יט) הכל צפוי, והרשות נתונה. ובטוב העולם נדון, והכל לפי רוב המעשה.

Everything depends on the abundance of good deeds.

Man is judged by the abundance of his good deeds and the quality of his action. The more he indicates his desire for good the greater degree of Divine mercy is extended to him. Rambam renders the phrase ‘Rov Hamaaseh’ not “abundance of his actions” but the frequency. For example, it is preferable to give many small gifts of charity to many individuals rather than to give one large gift to one person. A single great act may be the product of a temporary stirring of kind feeling that quickly dissipates. It is only through habituation to virtuous behavior that a person acquires good character. Everything depends on the number of times one performs a good deed rather than on the magnitude of a particular act. ‘Rov Hamaaseh’ can also be translated as ‘the greatness inherent in the act’ i.e., was it given quietly or only with fanfare or for the honor it brings? Was it especially virtuous because it was against the person’s usual nature? If so, he gets a greater reward.

[20] He used to say: Everything is given on collateral and a net is spread over all the living. The shop is open; the Merchant extends credit; the ledger is open; the hand writes; and whoever wishes to borrow, let him come and borrow. The collectors make their rounds constantly, every day, and collect payment from the person whether he realizes it or not. They have proof to rely upon; the judgment is a truthful judgment; and everything is prepared for the [final festive] banquet.

[כ] הוא הִיהָ אֹמֵר: הַכֹּל נָתַן בְּעֶרְכוֹן, וּמִצּוּדָה פְּרוּסָה עַל כָּל הַחַיִּים. הַחֲנוּת פְּתוּחָה, וְהַחֲנֻנִי מְקִיף, וְהַפִּנְקָס פְּתוּחַ, וְהַיָּד כּוֹתֶבֶת, וְכָל הָרוֹצֶה לְלוֹוֹת יָבֵא וְיִלְוֶה. וְהַגְּבָאִים מְחִוִּרִין תָּדִיר בְּכָל יוֹם וְנִפְרָעִין מִן הָאָדָם, מִדַּעְתּוֹ וּשְׁלֹא מִדַּעְתּוֹ, וַיֵּשׁ לָהֶם עַל מֶה שִׁיסָּמְכוּ. וְהָיִין רֵין אֶמֶת, וְהַכֹּל מֵתָקֵן לְסַעֲוָדָה.

This Mishnah tries to help humans understand how life works like a ledger or a bank. What you put in, good deeds, prayers, etc. vs what you take out i.e., pleasures, sins, bad behavior. However, there are some things in life that remain inexplicable yet we still try to understand them.

A man asked a farmer to teach him about farming. The farmer showed him a beautiful piece of land and the man was pleased. The farmer dug up the entire field now brown and bumpy. The man was appalled. The farmer showed him beautiful kernels of wheat. The man was pleased. The farmer threw them into the field of clods of soil. The man was horrified. Later the farmer showed him rows of green stalks sprouting. The man was pleased. Then the farmer cut them all down. The man was aghast. Then the farmer took the cut stalks and formed them into dust. The man was shocked. Then he mixed the dust with water made a pile and put it into an oven. After all that you burn it?? Then he took out the loaf of freshly baked bread crisp and brown and they had a delicious banquet.

Is this the way the world works? Inexplicable steps that lead to a future beautiful outcome? Perhaps in Olom Habah? Is this how we should look at the Holocaust? Was it a period of inexplicable destruction that led to or will lead to a worthwhile outcome?? Inexplicable – unacceptable. We poor humans cannot envision any outcome that could warrant such a catastrophe.

[20] He used to say: Everything is given on collateral and a net is spread over all the living. The shop is open; the Merchant extends credit; the ledger is open; the hand writes; and whoever wishes to borrow, let him come and borrow. The collectors make their rounds constantly, every day, and collect payment from the person whether he realizes it or not. They have proof to rely upon; the judgment is a truthful judgment; and everything is prepared for the [final festive] banquet.

(כ) הוא היה אומר: הכל נתון בערבון, ומצודה פרוסה על כל החיים. החנות פתוחה, והחנני מקיף, והפנקס פתוח, והיד כותבת, וכל הרוצה ללוות יבא וילווה. והגבאים מחזירין תדיר בכל יום ונפרעין מן האדם, מדעתו ושלא מדעתו, ויש להם על מה שיסמכו. והדין דין אמת, והכל מתקן לסעודה.

Everything is given on collateral.

God conducts the world like a business.

He extends credit to us and expects us to do worthwhile things with it.

Eventually He collects what was given to us. No one can prevent God from calling in the debt.

Every Jew is a guarantor that his fellow will produce spiritual profit for God. This joint responsibility is demonstrated in that one person can perform a Mitzvah on behalf of his fellow and fulfill that fellow's obligation for him. For example: One who has already recited Kiddush may recite it again for others who have not done so. Enabling another to fulfill his Mitzvah is a Mitzvah in itself.

‘Everything’ means - all of life's pleasures and enjoyments are given on collateral as long as we fulfill our obligation. God graciously provides for all our needs.

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A net is spread over all the living.

The net of the Angel of death is always spread out searching for victims like a fisherman's net to snare us. A foolish bird believes the hunter has put out food for it's benefit but it is intended only to entice or lure us into an inescapable trap of wickedness.

To Rabbeinu Yonah this phrase means only one thing. The net represents death and no one lives forever and must give an account of himself eventually. By being aware that the net is out there we should each be especially careful not to fall into it's trap.

It is not only our personal shortcomings that cause us to fail but our surroundings. The culture of the times hold us captive and limit our success! Therefore, be vigilant.

Avos 3:20:12-13

[20] He used to say: Everything is given on collateral and a net is spread over all the living. The shop is open; the Merchant extends credit; the ledger is open; the hand writes; and whoever wishes to borrow, let him come and borrow. The collectors make their rounds constantly, every day, and collect payment from the person whether he realizes it or not. They have proof to rely upon; the judgment is a truthful judgment; and everything is prepared for the [final festive] banquet.

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The shop is open.

Like a department store, life offers all opportunities. A person may purchase “whatever type of merchandise he likes”. Just as a person who visits an inn may drink as much wine as he pleases and a person may take more of this world than he can afford. He must take care to exercise financial and spiritual restraint.

Avos 3:20:14-15

[20] He used to say: Everything is given on collateral and a net is spread over all the living. The shop is open; the Merchant extends credit; the ledger is open; the hand writes; and whoever wishes to borrow, let him come and borrow. The collectors make their rounds constantly, every day, and collect payment from the person whether he realizes it or not. They have proof to rely upon; the judgment is a truthful judgment; and everything is prepared for the [final festive] banquet.

(כ) הוא היה אומר: הכל נתון בערבון, ומצודה פרוסה על כל החיים. החנות פתוחה, והחנוני מקיף, והפנקס פתוח, והיד כותבת, וכל הרוצה ללוות יבא וילווה. והגבאים מחזירין תדיר בכל יום ונפרעין מן האדם, מדעתו ושלא מדעתו, ויש להם על מה שיסמכו. והדין דין אמת, והכל מתקן לסעודה.

The merchant extends credit.

Rashi - A person is not immediately punished for his misdeeds.

Midrash Schmuel - The merchant is one's evil impulse. It induces him to buy beyond his means thus burdening him with debts of sin. The evil impulse entices man much like business advertising to convince him that he needs what is being offered.

Tiferes Yisroel - The merchant solicits business by offering sinful wares to potential customers.

Avos 3:20:16-19

[20] He used to say: Everything is given on collateral and a net is spread over all the living. The shop is open; the Merchant extends credit; the ledger is open; the hand writes; and whoever wishes to borrow, let him come and borrow. The collectors make their rounds constantly, every day, and collect payment from the person whether he realizes it or not. They have proof to rely upon; the judgment is a truthful judgment; and everything is prepared for the [final festive] banquet.

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The ledger is open and the hand writes.

Rav - No good or bad deed goes unrecorded.

Bava Kamma 50a - Hashem is patient but eventually judges all actions.

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Avos 3:20:20-24

[20] He used to say: Everything is given on collateral and a net is spread over all the living. The shop is open; the Merchant extends credit; the ledger is open; the hand writes; and whoever wishes to borrow, let him come and borrow. The collectors make their rounds constantly, every day, and collect payment from the person whether he realizes it or not. They have proof to rely upon; the judgment is a truthful judgment; and everything is prepared for the [final festive] banquet.

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And whoever wishes to borrow let him come and borrow.

Man has free choice. He can overindulge and be overburdened when payment is due.

The righteous only borrow (i.e., indulge in worldly pleasures) what they need to conduct the real business of this life.

Avos 3:21:6-11

[21] Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah says: If there is no Torah, there is no worldly occupation; if there is no worldly occupation, there is no Torah. If there is no wisdom, there is no fear of God; if there is no fear of God, there is no wisdom. If there is no knowledge, there is no understanding; if there is no understanding, there is no knowledge. If there is no flour there is no Torah; if there is no Torah, there is no flour.

(בא) רבי אלעזר בן עזריה אומר: אם אין תורה, אין דרך ארץ; אם אין דרך ארץ, אין תורה. אם אין חכמה, אין יראת; אם אין יראת, אין חכמה. אם אין דעת, אין בינה; אם אין בינה, אין דעת. אם אין קמח, אין תורה; אם אין תורה, אין קמח.

If there is no Torah there is:

No - worldly occupation. Torah regulates business ethics.

No - way of the world. Torah regulates interpersonal relations. It regulates ethics and morals. That is not to say that there are no people who are ethical and moral and who do not have Torah knowledge. But our belief that these rules were given by God makes them more likely to be adhered to when faced with temptation and the corrosive influence of society.

Avos 3:21:12-17

[21] Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah says: *If there is no Torah, there is no worldly occupation; if there is no worldly occupation, there is no Torah. If there is no wisdom, there is no fear of God; if there is no fear of God, there is no wisdom. If there is no knowledge, there is no understanding; if there is no understanding, there is no knowledge. If there is no flour there is no Torah; if there is no Torah, there is no flour.*

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Without a worldly occupation there is no Torah.

Business provides the opportunity to put the principles learned by Torah study into practice and to raise practical problems that challenge Torah concepts. It puts the Torah principles to the test of the crucible of real life experiences, otherwise Torah would only be theoretical.

Avos 3:22:4-10

[22] *He used to say: Anyone whose wisdom exceeds his good deeds, to what is he likened? – to a tree whose branches are numerous but whose roots are few; then the wind comes and uproots it and turns it upside down; as it is said: 'And he shall be like an isolated tree in an arid land and shall not see when good comes; he shall dwell on parched soil in the wilderness, on a salted land, uninhabited.' 4 But one whose good deeds exceed his wisdom, to what is he likened? – to a tree whose branches are few but whose roots are numerous; even if all the winds in the world were to come and blow against it, they could not budge it from its place; as it is said: 'And he shall be like a tree planted by waters, toward the stream spreading its roots, and it shall not notice the heat's arrival, and its foliage shall be fresh; in the year of drought it shall not worry, nor shall it cease from yielding fruit.'* 5

[כב] הוא היה אומר: כל שחכמתו מרבה ממעשיו, למה הוא דומה? לאילן שענפיו מרבין ושרשיו מועטין, והרוח באה ועוקרתו והופכתו על פניו, שנאמר: „והיה בערער בערבה, ולא יראה כי יבוא טוב, ושכן חררים במדבר, ארץ מלחה ולא תשב.“ אבל כל שמעשיו מרבין מחכמתו, למה הוא דומה? לאילן שענפיו מועטין ושרשיו מרבין, שאפילו כל הרוחות שבעולם באות ונושבות בו, אין מזיזין אותו ממקומו, שנאמר: „והיה כעץ שתול על מים, ועל יובל ישלח שרשיו, ולא יראה כי יבא חם, והיה עלהו רענן, ובשנת בצרת לא ידאג, ולא ימיש מעשות פרי.“ 5

A person whose wisdom exceeds his good deeds to what is he compared?

Torah knowledge is a result of proper behavior rather than its source. Not study but practice is the main objective. One's actions are roots from which his wisdom sprouts. AVOS 1:17, the Maharal teaches that man is a combination of intelligence and earth yet he is called “Adam” from ‘Adamah’, “earth. Because it is the flesh and blood person who must perform the Mitzvot and rise in spiritual and intellectual attainments. And concomitantly as one understands more one's obligation to an even higher level of observance is expected and in that way one can continue to advance spiritually. Art Scroll p200

‘Naaseh V’Nishnah’, “we will do and we will listen”. First perform. That performance of the Mitzvot will help you understand. One's good practices should proceed one's intellectual understanding. Jump in the water first then you will learn to swim. You cannot do it the other way.

Avos 3:23:6-12

[בג] רבי אלעזר בן חסמא אומר: קנין ופתיחי נדה הן הן גופי הלכות; תקופות וגמטריאות – פרפראות לחכמה.
(23) Rabbi Eliezer ben Chisma said: The laws of bird-offerings, and the laws regarding the beginning of menstrual periods – these are the essential laws; astronomy and mathematics are like the seasonings of wisdom.

The Laws of bird offerings and the laws regarding menstrual periods are the essential laws.

Astronomy and mathematics are like seasonings to wisdom. Just like seasoning that sharpen the taste these sharpen the mind. They enhance.

These laws are examples of mathematical computations made in order to resolve a halachically doubtful situation.

These two areas of halachah are found in the last tractates of the final two Mishnaic orders Kodeshim and Taharos and suggest that the Talmud should be completed before you study other subjects.

Some say mathematics is Gematria, a valuable tool for conveying many Torah lessons. Deut 32:47 “for it is not an empty thing for you”, ‘Ki lo davar rake who mekem’. This phrase adds up numerically to 679. The same value as the word Gematria, which teaches us that Gematria is a substantial adjunct to Torah study.

Pirkei Avos

Chapter 4

[1] **בן זומא** Ben Zoma says: Who is wise? He who learns from every person, as it is said: 'From all my teachers I grew wise.'³ Who is strong? He who subdues his personal inclination, as it is said: 'He who is slow to anger is better than the strong man, and a master of his passions is better than a conqueror of a city.'⁴ Who is rich? He who is happy with his lot, as it is said: 'When you eat of the labor of your hands, you are praiseworthy and all is well with you.'⁵ 'You are praiseworthy' – in this world; 'and all is well with you' – in the World to Come. Who is honored? He who honors others, as it is said: "For those who honor Me I will honor, and those who scorn Me shall be degraded."⁶

[א] בן זומא אומר: איזהו חכם? הלומד מכל אדם, שנאמר: „מכל מלמדי השכלתי.”³ איזהו גבור? הכובש את יצרו, שנאמר: „טוב ארך אפים מגבור, ומשל ברוחו מלכד עיר.”⁴ איזהו עשיר? השמח בחלקו, שנאמר: „יגיע כפיו כי תאכל אשריו וטוב לו.”⁵ „אשריו” – בעולם הזה, „וטוב לו” – לעולם הבא. איזהו מכבד? המכבד את הבריות, שנאמר: „כי מכבדי אכבד, ובני יקלו.”⁶

Ben Zoma said who is wise? He who learns from every man.

- This means that a wise person is able to learn from any person he chooses as his Rabbi.
- This is a high level – A beginning student should choose a single Rabbi. To learn from many may result in confusion – but after he has gained wisdom he can then learn from every man and not be confused.

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Who is wise? - he who learns from every man.

R Azulai – we can learn from a laborer who works with sincerity and dedication.

Baal Shem Tov – we can learn even from an evil person who can teach us what behavior to avoid and who can make us aware that there is a trace of that sinful inclination in each of us. Such awareness helps us avoid those temptations.

R Plonoye - even from the evil impulse who is diligent and resourceful in his evil work we can learn traits we can apply to productive endeavors.

R Boruch Epstein – who is wise? He who sees the consequence of his actions (Tamid 32A).

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Who is wise? He who learns from every person.

What designates them wise in the first place. Are they wise only after they have learned from other people or before? One who is ready to learn from all persons indicates that he possesses the initial wisdom. The desire for understanding, a thirst for knowledge and an appreciation of its importance, that makes him a fit receptacle for enlightenment.

The true key to wisdom is humility, an acknowledgement of one's limited knowledge and the willingness to learn from whomever can teach without regard to the status of the person who can enlighten him.

A handyman asked the Baal Shem Tov. “Do you have any items in your house that need to be fixed?” “No everything is in good shape nothing needs fixing”. The Baal Shem Tov thought later, but much in my life is not the way it should be. I must search my actions and life style and repair my spiritual condition. This is what I can learn from the handyman's question.

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As it is said “from all my teachers I grew wise”. Psalms 119:99 For your testimonies are my conversation.

If you are learning from every person, every person is your teacher. King David is saying that “every person was a teacher to me from the high to the law”. King Solomon said, “Search for wisdom as you would for silver or gold, they are not demeaned just because they came from the ground”. Knowledge and insight are not demeaned even if they come from people who seem low or who might even be your enemy or rival.

Can we learn from babies? They are always busy, never unoccupied. A baby makes his needs known and when the basic needs are satisfied he is content. From a burglar? He does his work quietly and discretely, tries and tries again, no item of value is overlooked. He is anxious to profit from every valuable he encounters, he is loyal to his comrades and does not boast of his accomplishments.

If you are looking for a valuable object you will search for it every where,. If you receive a valuable package you won't care if the delivery man is not dressed in fancy clothes.

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To learn from all men

is indeed the height of wisdom.

The wise man is one who knows how little he knows.

A man is called wise as long as he seeks wisdom like a thirsty man who seeks water.

A wise man will seek knowledge from every source.

Abarbanel p225

A thirsty man is not ashamed to ask someone for a drink of water – from his

‘Melamdi’ – “my teachers”, every one can teach him something.

Even a small piece of wood can ignite a large branch (Taanit 7a). A young student can often bring an insight or a question that will benefit even his teacher.

Abarbanel p226

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Who is wise? Who is strong? Who is rich?

A person has a right to be proud of his knowledge – it will lead him to the ultimate conclusion that there is a God.

He has a right to be proud of his strength – to overcome his evil inclination.
Never forget the strongest man can't carry as much as a donkey.

Has he a right to be proud of his wealth? Yes – since he has subjected himself to the will of God he is happy with his portion. A truly wealthy man.

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Who is strong? One who subdues his inclinations.

Which is easier to win a battle against a physical enemy or against one's evil inclination?

A physical enemy can be vanquished permanently.

The evil impulse can only be subdued, it will return again and again. One is aware of the physical enemy but the spiritual enemy passes itself off as seeking your benefit and is therefore more dangerous.

R Naphtali of Ropshitz - You must conquer your own bad inclinations. People are often busy correcting other people's failures and never stop to see their own.

R Yisrael Salanter – people should worry about their own spiritual needs and their friend's physical ones. Not the other way around.

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He who is slow to anger is better than a strong man and a master of passions is better than a conqueror of a city (Proverbs 16:32).

R Yonah - one who defeats an external enemy may not truly be strong his enemy may merely be weak. Overcoming an internal enemy such as anger passion requires true strength.

Magen Avos - a donkey is stronger than man in its ability to carry. A lion is a greater warrior. Only in strength of character can man excel in comparison.

Rav – it is better to be slow to anger out of strength and self control rather than out of docility.

Notice we are advised to master our passion not totally irradicate it. Passion has value. It drives a person toward a goal. Its misdirection is to be avoided. The evil inclination has a legitimate role in life and should only be conquered not destroyed. Torah and Mitzvos performed without passion are deficient.

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Who is rich? He who is happy with his lot.

He who wants more will never have enough.

A wealthy person is one who is a contented person.

Recall how happy you were when you obtained a particular possession and how soon its present no longer is exciting. You take it for granted. Consider if you would no longer have it. You would want it. Realize you already have it and be content and rejoice as if you just now obtained it.

Ruach Chaim - Note the word ‘Chelko’ “his portion”. Most people only achieve a portion of their desires. This should be enough.

A man said, “business is good but it wouldn’t hurt if it was a little better”. The Chafetz Chaim said, “who says it wouldn’t hurt? Everything that God does is for the good and if you change that it could be bad. A person’s faith is his treasure. Be satisfied with that”.

One man may be made wealthy in order to have him give Tzedakah. Another may be poor in order to receive Tzedakah. Both should grow spiritually with their given portion,

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Who is honored. He who honors others.

A person can only give what he possess. Only an honorable person can accord honor to another.

R Yonah - One who honors others really only honors himself. He cannot add anything to the other person by showering him with praise. If he truly deserves the praise the expression of esteem adds nothing and if he does not deserve praise hollow accolades will not alter his status.

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[א] **בן זומא** אומר: איזהו חכם? הלומד מכל אדם, שנאמר: „מכל מלמדי השכלתי.”³ איזהו גבור? הבודש את יצרו, שנאמר: „טוב ארך אפים מגבור, ומשל ברוחו מלכד עיר.”⁴ איזהו עשיר? השמח בחלקו, שנאמר: „יגיע בפיו כי תאכל אשריו וטוב לו.”⁵ „אשריו” – בעולם הזה, „וטוב לו” – לעולם הבא. איזהו מכבד? המכבד את הבריות, שנאמר: „כי מכבדי אכבד, ובוי יקל.”⁶

Who is wealthy? He who is happy with his portion.

Vilna Gaon – spending time with the poor will humble you and you will be content with your portion,

R' S R Hirsch – the lust for more can never be satisfied and a person may crave such that his joy in what he now has is marred as he strives for the elusive more.

R' Avraham Pam – people search desperately to find the city of happiness - not realizing it can only be found in the ‘state of mind’.

Kohelet Rabbah 1:13 He who possesses one hundred desires two hundred.

R' Joseph Breuer – a person up in age should be satisfied if he retains only a portion of his powers ‘bechelko’ – “a portion of himself”.

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I will honor those who honor me (1) and those who despise me shall be cursed (2).

- (1) I will honor him personally.
- (2) Passively, not by God but by the hands of others. He who shows disrespect for the words of the Torah and ridicules its commandments will be dishonored by means other than the direct action of God.
- (2) The only time God curses a wicked person is when he curses a saint “the one who curses you”, said God to Abraham, “him will I curse” (Gen 2:3).

[ב] בן עזאי אומר: הָיוּ רֶץ לְמִצְוָה קָלָה, וּבֹרַח מִן הָעֲבֵרָה; שְׂמִימָה גִּוְרֶרֶת מִצְוָה, וְעֲבֵרָה גִּוְרֶרֶת עֲבֵרָה, שֶׁשֹּׁכֵר מִצְוָה מִצְוָה, וְשֹׁכֵר עֲבֵרָה עֲבֵרָה.

[2] Ben Azzai said: Run to perform even a 'minor' mitzvah, and flee from sin; for one mitzvah leads to another mitzvah, and one sin leads to another sin; for the consequence of a mitzvah is a mitzvah, and the consequence of a sin is a sin.

Run to perform (even) a light Mitzvah.

Ben Azzai – when one performs any Mitzvah he becomes conditioned to obey God’s will and will perform other Mitzvos.

Rambam - This teaches promptness in the performance of Mitzvos, not to procrastinate but to run to perform it.

Sfas Emes - This teaches us that “light” Mitzvos should be pursued as passionately as difficult ones.
(Makkos 10a)

Baal Shem Tov - We are advised to perform the Mitzvah with as much enthusiasm as if it was the first time keeping our relationship with God fresh. Do not let our service to Him become old and tired and He will not cast us away in old age when our strength fails us and will not forsake us (Psalms 71:9).

What is an easy Mitzvah-a light Mitzvah?

- It requires little physical effort.
- One is habituated to it.
- It is a logical Mitzvah. We understand it and agree such as charity, honor to one’s parents etc.
- It is enjoyable. Shabbos, or wearing a beautiful Talis or having a beautiful esrog. These seem easy to engage in.

Avos 4:2:1-7

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for one mitzvah leads to another mitzvah, and one sin leads to another sin;
for the consequence of a mitzvah is a mitzvah, and the consequence of a sin is a
sin.

[ב] בן עזאי אומר: הוי רץ למצוה קלה, ובורח מן העברה; שמצוה
גוררת מצוה, ועברה גוררת עברה, ששכר מצוה מצוה, ושכר
עברה עברה.

Ben Azzi says: Run to do even a minor Mitzvah,

because the ‘Yetzer Hara’ “the evil urge”, is always causing good deeds to run from us and placing stumbling blocks in our way.

Avos 4:2:8-10

[2] Ben Azzai said: Run to perform even a 'minor' mitzvah, and flee from sin; for one mitzvah leads to another mitzvah, and one sin leads to another sin; for the consequence of a mitzvah is a mitzvah, and the consequence of a sin is a sin.

[ב] בן עזאי אומר: הוי רץ למצוה קלה, ובורח מן העברה; שמצוה גוררת מצוה, ועברה גוררת עברה, ששכר מצוה מצוה, ושכר עברה עברה.

and flee from sin.

An evil urge on the contrary runs after a person to overtake him to urge him to enjoy himself in this world. Therefore, it appears as if sin is chasing a person and we must actively run away from sin.

One good deed brings on another good deed. 17-19

A sin brings on another sin. 20-22

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Avos 4:2:8-10

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And flee from sin.

R Yonah – Rashi - Each wrongful act dulls the conscience and makes the next sin easier to do. One becomes conditioned to a sinful life style.

Maharal - Therefore, the Mishnah does not use the term a light sin as it does regarding Mitzvos. Every sin is at first easy to perform, but can lead to heavy consequences.

Art Scroll p216

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גוררת מצוה, ועברה גוררת עברה, ששכר מצוה מצוה, ושכר
עברה עברה.

For a Mitzvah leads to another Mitzvah and a sin leads to another sin.

There is a domino effect. An unleashing of a spiritual chain reaction.

Rashi - Even a minor Mitzvah can start this chain and so can what seems to be an insignificant sin. A sin must be avoided at all costs for in its wake many more will follow. The lure of mild transgressions opens the door for premeditated iniquity. One light sin leads to another more severe.

R Yonah - The reward for doing a Mitzvah is the Heavenly gift of being able to do another Mitzvah till it becomes second nature.

Spiritual abilities are like muscles. The more they are used the better they develop.

Avos 4:2:17-19

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The benefit of a Mitzvah is a Mitzvah.

Here on earth there is no reward sufficient to reward a person for performing a Mitzvah except the opportunity to do another Mitzvah.

A wealthy man searched for a young scholar to marry his daughter and receive a huge dowry. But the prospective bridegroom must answer certain difficult Talmudic questions. He traveled far and wide but not one could answer correctly. One day a student came to him and said I am not eager for your daughter or your money but I must know the answer to those difficult Talmudic questions you posed. He was interested in learning for learning's sake. The wealthy man chose him for his daughter. The reward for a Mitzvah is another Mitzvah.

[3] He used to say: Do not be scornful of any person and do not be disdainful of anything, for you have no person without his hour and no thing without its place.

[ג] הוא היה אומר: אל תהי בו לכל אדם, ואל תהי מפליג לכל דבר,
שאיין לך אדם שאין לו שעה, ואין לך דבר שאין לו מקום.

Do not despise any person

Rambam – anyone may have opportunity to do you harm or good.

Sefas Emes – you may despise his deeds but don't despise the person. The person can always be restored. In every person there is something good.

[ג] הוא הָיָה אומֵר: אֵל תְּהִי בּוֹ לְכָל אָדָם, וְאֵל תְּהִי מִפְּלִיג לְכָל דָּבָר, שֶׁאֵין לָהּ אָדָם שֶׁאֵין לוֹ שָׁעָה, וְאֵין לָהּ דָּבָר שֶׁאֵין לוֹ מָקוֹם.
 [3] He used to say: Do not be scornful of any person and do not be disdainful of anything, for you have no person without his hour and no thing without its place.

Do not be scornful of any person.

Nobody was created for nothing. God created everything and everyone. So they have merit and are part of the Divine scheme. Something good and beneficial will come from each individual. It is an insult to his creator to insult any of his creations.

Do not let yourself be the subject of abuse. Don't bring it on. Avoid haughtiness and ostentation. Scholars especially must be careful for distain they earn by bad behavior extends beyond their person to include disdain for the honor of the Torah or other scholarly attainments,

Do not debase the entire person for a particular character flaw. Everyone has redeeming value. Do not debase or be scornful even of yourself. For if you believe you are worthless you create an excuse to not even try to improve yourself.

[3] He used to say: Do not be scornful of any person and do not be disdainful of anything, for you have no person without his hour and no thing without its place.

[ג] הוא היה אומר: אל תהי בז לכל אדם, ואל תהי מפליג לכל דבר, שאין לך אדם שאין לו שעה, ואין לך דבר שאין לו מקום.

And do not be disdainful of anything.

Even seemingly insignificant items play a role in the world.

Insects purify the air of microbes. Worms, till the soil.

One who despises something will suffer from it. Proverbs 13:13

King David in a Midrash questioned the need for insanity, fleas and spiders. When he was captured by King Achish of Gath he escaped by feigning insanity (I Samuel 21). When David wanted to take King Saul's spear while he was sleeping, a flea bit Saul causing him to move his leg allowing David the access to his spear (I Sam 26). Lastly when David was hiding from Saul in a cave God sent a spider to quickly spin a web across the entrance. Saul came saw the web and thought surely no man has entered here. This saved David from harm. Everything has its usefulness and purpose.

[3] *He used to say: Do not be scornful of any person and do not be disdainful of anything, for you have no person without his hour and no thing without its place.*

[ג] הוא דִּיהָ אָמַר: אַל תְּהִי בּוֹ לְבַל אָדָם, וְאַל תְּהִי מִפְּלִיג לְבַל דְּבָר, שְׂאִין לָהּ אָדָם שְׂאִין לוֹ שְׁעָה, וְאִין לָהּ דְּבָר שְׂאִין לוֹ מְקוֹם.

There is nothing that does not have its place.

Every object has usefulness. Every person has a purpose. Every bit of knowledge is precious and may later prove itself useful. Let man not think that God created anything that is superfluous.

The word ‘Makom’ is another name for God. Read the above as – and there is no item that does not contain a reflection of the omnipresent within it.

Nature itself is a living reflection of God and every molecule is imprinted with His signature.

Avos 4:4:6-13
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[4] Rabbi Levitas of Yavneh said: Be exceedingly humble in spirit, for the anticipated end of mortal man is worms.

[ד] רבי לויטס איש יבנה אומר: מאד מאד הוי שפל רוח, שתקנות אנוש
רמה.

Be very humble in spirit for the anticipation of man is the worm.

Rambam – Commentary on the Mishnah – In all matters a person ought to adopt a middle course but haughty pride is so bad a quality that one should go to the extreme opposite towards humility of spirit.

Sotah 4b - any person in whom there is arrogance is like an idol worshipper.

Numbers 12:3 Moshe our teacher was exceedingly humble.

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[ד] רבי לויטס איש יבנה אומר: מאד מאד הוי שפל רוח, שתקות אנוש
רמה.

Be exceedingly humble in spirit for the anticipated end of mortal man is worms.

In life it is best to follow a moderate approach. Not too much generosity or too much stinginess.

Except in regards to haughtiness there moderation is not enough and one must become very very humble. Why the emphasis? Because arrogance is a trait toward which man naturally inclines. He is likely to be attracted to that characteristic and so he must be warned to avoid even a small amount. Be very very careful.

It is easy to be arrogant even about your humility. The end of mortal man is worms, puts into perspective our own grandiose ideas of our importance and also teaches us to not feel insulted by another person's disparaging remarks. He is a temporary creature who will go on to be food for the maggots.

Human aspirations are deceptive and disappointing. Only with God's help can one achieve anything.

[5] *Rabbi Yochanan ben Beroka said: Whoever desecrates the Name of Heaven in secret, they will exact punishment from him in public; unintentional or intentional, both are alike regarding desecration of the Name.*

[ה] רבי יוחנן בן ברוקא אומר: כל המחלל שם שמים בסתר, נפרעין ממנו בגלוי. אחד שוגג ואחד מזיד בחלול השם.

Whoever desecrates the name of Heaven in secret, they will exact punishment from him in public.

Chilul Hashem, the root word may be ‘chullin’ “profane or mundane”. Whoever treats the honor of God as though He was not special, profanes Him. The root could also be ‘challal’ “empty”: of God’s presence and showing by his behavior that he believes God has no influence, has desecrated His name. Chilul Hashem can be a private sin as much as a public sin.

Bad behavior by someone identified as a member of a certain group gives a bad name to the entire group.

Even remaining silent in the face of improper or dishonest behavior of others is wrong. You should protest and not acquiesce. Not to do so desecrates God’s name as it appears to others that you condone by your silence the improper behavior.

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(ה) רבי יוחנן בן ברוקא אומר: כל המחלל שם שמים בסתר, נפרעין ממנו בגלוי. אחד שוגג ואחד מזיד בחלול השם.

Whoever desecrates God's name in private. They will exact punishment from him in public.

Desecration involves the sort of conduct that permits onlookers to think of observant Jews as acting in an unworthy manner. From a great person a minor act, from a regular person simple rudeness or dishonesty can be viewed as desecration.

How can private acts result in desecration of God's name? Nobody sees it – but they can see the punishment given to an observant Jew and say – “how unfair God is punishing one of his observant followers”.

They will question God's sense of justice and that is desecration of the name.

Avos 4:5:6-10

[ה] רבי יוחנן בן ברוקא אומר: כל המחלל שם שמים בסתר, נפרעין ממנו בגלוי. אחד שוגג ואחד מזיד בחלול השם.
[5] Rabbi Yochanan ben Beroka said: Whoever desecrates the Name of Heaven in secret, they will exact punishment from him in public; unintentional or intentional, both are alike regarding desecration of the Name.

Even staying quiet can be a desecration of God's name.

Silence in the face of bad behavior or the trampling of moral principles is also a desecration – do not be a silent accomplice to an evil act.

Privately often means that a person is more afraid of the opinion of people than he has fear of God and wants to protect his own reputation.

Avos 4:6:7-14

[6] Rabbi Yishmael bar Rabbi Yose said: One who studies Torah in order to teach, is given the means to study and to teach; and one who studies in order to practice, is given the means to study and to teach, to observe and to practice. [ו] רבי ישמעאל בר רבי יוסי אומר: הלומד על מנת ללמד, מספיקין בידו ללמוד וללמד; והלומד על מנת לעשות, מספיקין בידו ללמוד וללמד, לשמור ולעשות.

One who studies in order to teach will be given the means to study and to teach.

One should teach topics that his students might need even if the teacher gains nothing from it. The example of Moshe Rabbeinu is given when he taught the children of Israel the laws relating to the land of Israel even though he would never enter there. Those who place the needs of others above their own will be rewarded.

[6] Rabbi Yishmael bar Rabbi Yose said: One who studies Torah in order to teach, is given the means to study and to teach; and one who studies in order to practice, is given the means to study and to teach, to observe and to practice.

[ו] רבי ישמעאל בר רבי יוסי אומר: הלומד על מנת ללמד, מספיקין בידו ללמוד וללמד; והלומד על מנת לעשות, מספיקין בידו ללמוד וללמד, לשמור ולעשות.

One who studies in order to teach.

Means unselfishness is its own reward.

Teach even though you get no reward – even though it does you no good.

Teach even those students you know won't follow.

Moses learned all the laws of living in Israel and taught them, though he would not get to go there to practice them. Learn to teach even if you will not perform your teachings. For example, a Yisroel learning laws of the Kohanim in order to teach them.

One who places the needs of others ahead of his own will reap unparalleled success in his own endeavors.

The family of a teacher who devotes himself to his students will have his children receive special heavenly help.

Avos 4:6:7-14

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(ו) רבי ישמעאל בר רבי יוסי אומר: הלומד על מנת ללמד, מספיקין
בִּידוֹ לְלַמּוֹד וּלְלַמֵּד; וְהַלּוֹמֵד עַל מְנַת לַעֲשׂוֹת, מְסַפִּיקִין בִּידוֹ לְלַמּוֹד
וּלְלַמֵּד, לְשִׁמּוֹר וּלַעֲשׂוֹת.

He who learns in order to teach I will provide sustenance for him.

Rambam – quoted this to argue that Rabbis should not get paid excessively for their teachings.

Avos 4:6:15-24

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[ו] רבי ישמעאל בר רבי יוסי אומר: הלומד על מנת ללמד, מספיקין בידו ללמוד וללמד; והלומד על מנת לעשות, מספיקין בידו ללמוד וללמד, לשמור ולעשות.

And one who studies in order to practice is given the means to study, teach, observe and to practice.

Study in order to teach is viewed as a superficial goal, Torah study must be an outcome oriented activity not merely the theoretical aspects of Torah but with an eye toward practical application. Such as acts of kindness.

One who learns in order to act properly will be blessed with the ability to remember his learning in order to address the practical questions that arise.

[7] Rabbi Tzadok said: Do not separate yourself from the community; [when serving as a judge] do not act as a lawyer; do not make the Torah a crown for self-glorification, nor a spade with which to dig. So too Hillel used to say: He who exploits the crown [of Torah for personal benefit] shall fade away. From this you derive that whoever seeks personal benefit from the words of Torah removes his life from the world.

[ז] רבי צדוק אומר: אל תפרוש מן הצבור; ואל תעש עצמך בעורכי הדין; ואל תעשה עטרה להתגדל בה, ולא קרדם לחפר בה. וכך היה הלל אומר: וראשיתמש בתגא חלף. הא למדת: כל הנהנה מדברי תורה, נוטל חייו מן העולם.

Do not separate yourself from the community

the community is made up of
all types of people

} righteous
average
wicked

They blend to create a harmonious service to Hashem.

WWII – dilemma - Should The rabbi serve the community by staying and dying or should he serve the community by leaving with it to rebuild a vibrant Jewish community elsewhere?

- Give importance and support to activities by your presence. They are enhanced by your presence and participation.
- We are instructed by this Mishnah to pray as a community.

[7] Rabbi Tzadok said: Do not separate yourself from the community; [when serving as a judge] do not act as a lawyer; do not make the Torah a crown for self-glorification, nor a spade with which to dig. So too Hillel used to say: He who exploits the crown [of Torah for personal benefit] shall fade away. From this you derive that whoever seeks personal benefit from the words of Torah removes his life from the world.

וְרַבִּי צְדוֹק אוֹמֵר: אַל תִּפְרוֹשׁ מִן הַצִּבּוֹר; וְאַל תַּעַשׂ עֲצָמְךָ בְּעוֹרֵבֵי הַדִּינִין; וְאַל תַּעֲשֶׂה עֶטְרָה לְהִתְגַּדֵּל בָּהּ, וְלֹא קָרָדִם לַחֲפֹר בָּהּ. וְכךָ הָיָה הֵלֵל אוֹמֵר: וְדַאֲשָׁתַמֵּשׁ בְּתִגָּא חִלָּף. הָא לְמִדָּת: כָּל הַנִּהְנֶה מִדְּבָרֵי תוֹרָה, נוֹטֵל חַיּוֹ מִן הָעוֹלָם.

Do not make the Torah a crown for self-glorification. 13-17

Rav, Rashi-Nedarim 62a - So others will call him learned. Learn out of love for God and his Torah and honor will eventually come.

A person who gets pleasure from words of Torah removes his life from this world. Can be interpreted two ways.

If you use the Torah for your self aggrandisement or personal benefit you will be punished by losing your life at least in the world to come. Another interpretation is that the study of Torah can be so edifying that the ecstasy and joy elevates one from this world and removes him/her from the mundane considerations of our lives.

[7] Rabbi Tzadok said: Do not separate yourself from the community; [when serving as a judge] do not act as a lawyer; do not make the Torah a crown for self-glorification, nor a spade with which to dig. So too Hillel used to say: He who exploits the crown [of Torah for personal benefit] shall fade away. From this you derive that whoever seeks personal benefit from the words of Torah removes his life from the world.

[ז] רבי צדוק אומר: אל תפרוש מן הצבור; ואל תעש עצמך בעורכי הדין; ואל תעשה עטרה להתגדל בה, ולא קרדם לחפר בה. וכך היה הלל אומר: וראשתמש בתגא חלף. הא למדת: כל הנהנה מדברי תורה, נוטל חייו מן העולם.

Do not make the Torah a crown for self glorification.

Rambam – it is not fitting to accept money from people for studying Torah and teaching it (Commentary on the Mishnah).

Hil Talmud Torah 3:10 accepting money for teaching Torah profanes the name, brings Torah into contempt, brings evil upon himself, and deprives himself of the life hereafter.

[7] Rabbi Tzadok said: Do not separate yourself from the community; [when serving as a judge] do not act as a lawyer; do not make the Torah a crown for self-glorification, nor a spade with which to dig. So too Hillel used to say: He who exploits the crown [of Torah for personal benefit] shall fade away. From this you derive that whoever seeks personal benefit from the words of Torah removes his life from the world.

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Nor a spade to dig with

The spade is the spade of livelihood.

One should teach Torah to others without taking compensation. Torah is not a commodity to be marketed.

Rambam permits only three financial favors toward the Torah Scholar.

1. A person may manage the financial affairs of a Torah Scholar free of charge leaving him free to study and teach (Berachos 34b, Kesubos 111b).
2. If he is a merchant local authorities may forbid competition until he has sold out his inventory (Bava Basra 22a).
3. Torah Scholars may be exempt from certain types of taxes. Magan Avos – Rav-Kesef Mishneh (R'Yosef Karo) R'Yaakov Emden disagree.

They hold that a community may honor a distinguished person with compensation. It brings honor to the Torah and benefit to the community.

R' Moshe Feinstein - A person may study even for ulterior motives (a stipend) and he will eventually study for the real purpose (Sanhedrin 105b). Since the Holocaust we must incentivise people to become Torah Scholars or we will have a spiritual Holocaust as well as the physical one.

[8] *Rabbi Yose said: Whoever honors the Torah is himself honored by people; and whoever disgraces the Torah is himself disgraced by people.* (ח) רבי יוסי אומר: כל המְכַבֵּד אֶת הַתּוֹרָה, גּוֹפּוּ מְכַבֵּד עַל הַבְּרִיּוֹת;
וְכָל הַמְּחַלֵּל אֶת הַתּוֹרָה, גּוֹפּוּ מְחַלֵּל עַל הַבְּרִיּוֹת.

Whoever honors the Torah will himself be honored by the people.

Rambam – honoring the Torah means eagerness to carry out its teachings –
(Commentary on the Mishnah).

Meiri – exalt her and she will exalt you.

Yoma 86a – consider how upright and becoming is the conduct of the person who studies Torah and how happy are his father and his teacher who raised him and taught him.

R Tzokok Hakohen of Lublin - There are people who stand up in deference to a Torah Scroll yet do not do so in honor of a Torah Scholar. The Torah was given to us so that it's words and messages would produce wonderful people. A Torah Scholar is therefore a living embodiment of the Torah itself and is worthy of honor equally.

Avos 4:8:5-7

[8] Rabbi Yose said: Whoever honors the Torah is himself honored by people;
and whoever disgraces the Torah is himself disgraced by people.

[ח] רבי יוסי אומר: כָּל הַמְּכַבֵּד אֶת הַתּוֹרָה, גּוֹפוּ מִכְבוֹד עַל הַבְּרִיּוֹת;
וְכָל הַמַּחְלִיל אֶת הַתּוֹרָה, גּוֹפוּ מִחֶלֶל עַל הַבְּרִיּוֹת.

Honor the Torah

explicate it's words, letters and phrases.

One who exhibits eagerness to follow its teachings, honors the Torah.

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Avos 4:8:4-11 (continued)

[8] *Rabbi Yose said: Whoever honors the Torah is himself honored by people; and whoever disgraces the Torah is himself disgraced by people.*

[ח] רבי יוסי אומר: כל המְכַבֵּד אֶת הַתּוֹרָה, גּוֹפּוֹ מְכָבֶד עַל הַבְּרִיּוֹת;
וְכָל הַמְּחַלֵּל אֶת הַתּוֹרָה, גּוֹפּוֹ מְחַלֵּל עַל הַבְּרִיּוֹת.

Tiferes Yisroel. - proper care of the Torah and its books means to bind them and repair them properly (to return them to the shelf after use) to avoid laying them on a chair or floor or to place another less important book on top of them.

Exemplary behavior by a person known to be a Torah Scholar adds to respect for the Torah by others who observe this.

People respect those who respect themselves. All Jews represent Judaism and the Torah. To wear one's Judaism with pride and knowledge will cause people to honor all you stand for.

Avos 4:9:5-8

[9] Rabbi Yishmael his son said: One who withdraws from judgment removes from himself hatred, robbery, and [the responsibility for] an unnecessary oath; but one who is too self-confident in handing down legal decisions is a fool, wicked and arrogant of spirit.

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

One who withdraws from judgement.

R Yonah - If more competent judges are available one should withdraw in their favor.

Rashi - A judge, rather than provide a judgement, should attempt to bring about compromises.

- Litigants should not go to trial but should find a way to compromise.

Baal HaTurim - “These are the statutes” is an acronym ‘Eleh Ha Mishpatim’.

‘Hadyan Metzuvah Sheyaaseh Pisharah Terem Yeaseh Mishpat Ex 21:1’.

“A judge must seek compromise before rendering strict justice”.

R Mordechai of Neshchiz - ‘Hachoshek et Atzmo’ - “He should remove himself” means he should remove his personal prejudices from the judicial process.

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Avos 4:9:9-11

[9] Rabbi Yishmael his son said: One who withdraws from judgment removes from himself hatred, robbery, and [the responsibility for] an unnecessary oath; but one who is too self-confident in handing down legal decisions is a fool, wicked and arrogant of spirit.

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

Removes from himself hatred.

Rav - Believes this addresses the judge since the losing litigant often resents the judge. Avoid this by aiding compromise.

Rashi - Believes this addresses the litigants who if they compromise, can conclude the case with less animosity toward each other.

Avos 4:9:12

[9] *Rabbi Yishmael his son said: One who withdraws from judgment removes from himself hatred, robbery, and [the responsibility for] an unnecessary oath; but one who is too self-confident in handing down legal decisions is a fool, wicked and arrogant of spirit.*

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

And robbery

A judge is always at risk of issuing an erroneous decision effectively depriving one of the litigants of what is properly his.

Rashi - compromise enables one to avoid this type of larceny.

Exodus 21:1

These are the statutes...

Is an acronym for

The judge is commanded to seek a compromise before imposing strict justice.

Baal HaTurim

Avos 4:9:13-14

[9] Rabbi Yishmael his son said: One who withdraws from judgment removes from himself hatred, robbery, and [the responsibility for] an unnecessary oath; but one who is too self-confident in handing down legal decisions is a fool, wicked and arrogant of spirit.

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

And (the responsibility of) an unnecessary oath.

The judge may impose or a litigant may offer an oath which may be a false oath. An out of court settlement can avoid all of these ethical and halachic pitfalls.

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[10] He used to say: Do not act as judge alone, for no one judges alone except One; and do not say, 'Accept my view,' for they are permitted to, but not you. וְאֵל תְּהִי דֵן יְחִידִי, שֶׁאֵין דֵּן יְחִידִי אֶלָּא אֶתְּהוּ. וְאַל תֹּאמַר: „קַבְּלוּ דַעְתִּי“ שֶׁהֵן רְשָׁאִין וְלֹא אַתָּה.

Don't be a solitary judge there is only one solitary judge.

It is best to avoid being involved in the judicial process either as an adversary or as a judge.

An expert is permitted to be a solitary judge and adjudicate cases alone but it is more correct to avoid doing so.

Tosophos Yom Tov - It is a moral obligation not to serve as a solitary judge even if all litigants are willing to have you do so.

Machzor Vitri - Better to be a panel of three to discuss the relative merits and arguments. Also responsibility and enmity of the litigants will not fall on one person.

Zechus Avos - a judge who issues a true ruling has God as his partner and therefore, will not be acting as a judge alone.

Don't be a solitary judge. Don't think that you are only judging the people before you. The decision affects many others. A wrong decision could strip potential heirs of their inheritance. One is never judging a solitary defendant.

Avos 4:11:4-11

[11] Rabbi Yonasan said: Whoever fulfills the Torah despite poverty, will ultimately fulfill it in wealth; but whoever neglects the Torah because of wealth, will ultimately neglect it in poverty.

[יא] רבי יונתן אומר: כל המקיים את התורה מעני, סופו לקיימה מעשר;
וכל המבטל את התורה מעשר, סופו לבטלה מעני.

Whoever fulfills the Torah while poor will eventually fulfill it in wealth.

The Torah has the power to expand a person's capabilities. A person may be poor in material wealth or in his intellectual capabilities. If he is diligent and sincere in his Torah studies he can be assured of improvement.

Mishle 30:8 - Given a choice between wealth and wisdom King Solomon chose wisdom thus “marrying the daughter of the King”. (p244) Then you get everything.

Berachos 57a - line 15 B21 - “The Torah was given as an inheritance don't read inheritance but read betrothed to Israel”.

Avos 4:12:4-8

[12] Rabbi Meir said: Reduce your business activities and engage in Torah study. Be of humble spirit before every person. If you should neglect the [study of] Torah, you will come upon many excuses to neglect it; but if you labor in the Torah, God has ample reward to give you.

[ויב] רבי מאיר אומר: הוי ממעט בעסק, ועסק בתורה; והוי שפל רוח בפני כל אדם; ואם בטלת מן התורה, יש לך בטלים הרבה כנגדך; ואם עמלת בתורה, יש לך שכר הרבה לתן לך.

Limit your business activities and engage in Torah Study.

Rav, R' Yonah - make Torah study your main occupation.

Chofetz Chaim - Time is money. Wrong. Money is time. Time is needed to be expended in order to make money. What is more valuable? Time is a limited commodity whereas there is an unlimited amount of money and things it could buy in the world. So it is clear, the more limited the item the more precious. Conserve your time. Spend it wisely.

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[12] Rabbi Meir said: Reduce your business activities and engage in Torah study. Be of humble spirit before every person. If you should neglect the [study of] Torah, you will come upon many excuses to neglect it; but if you labor in the Torah, God has ample reward to give you.

[יב] רבי מאיר אומר: הוי ממעט בעסק, ועסק 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.

Be of humble spirit before every person.

Rav - be ready to learn from any person.

Abarbanel - Be humble, relates to your business efforts. Don't spend your time earning more for honor or the prestige of having wealth. Recognize that the drive to have a lot of money is not a matter of consumption. A person can only consume so much. Forsake that type of glory and that relatively meaningless accomplishment and devote that time to Torah studies.

Avos 4:12:24-32

[12] *Rabbi Meir said: Reduce your business activities and engage in Torah study. Be of humble spirit before every person. If you should neglect the [study of] Torah, you will come upon many excuses to neglect it; but if you labor in the Torah, God has ample reward to give you.*

[יב] רבי מאיר אומר: הוי ממעט בעסק, ועסק בתורה; והוי שפל רוח בפני כל אדם; ואם בטלת מן התורה, יש לך בטלים הרבה בנגדך; ואם עמלת בתורה, יש לו שכר הרבה לתן לך.

But if you labor in the Torah He has ample reward to give you.

Meiri - Ample rewards, Both in this world, to be able to support his family and the next.

R Yehudah - Note that the reward is for laboring in the Torah, not limited to your success in learning.

Rambam - we can learn from the experiences of the Kohanim and Leviim. Whoever devotes himself to serve God will have his needs provided for. This promise of sustenance is not limited only to the Kohanim and Leviim, it is available to as all.

Avos 4:13:6-12

[13] *Rabbi Eliezer ben Yaakov said: He who fulfills even a single mitzvah gains himself a single advocate, and he who commits even a single transgression gains himself a single accuser. Repentance and good deeds are like a shield against retribution.*

[וג] רבי אליעזר בן יעקב אומר: העושה מצוה אחת קונה לו פרקליט
אחד; והעובר עברה אחת, קונה לו קטיגור אחד. תשובה ומעשים
טובים כתריס בפני הפרענות.

He who fulfills even one Mitzvah gains himself one advocate.

Rashi, R Yonah - consider that a person's actions serve as witnesses for him when he presents himself before the Heavenly court.

Meiri - don't discount the great value of even the smallest Mitzvah or good deed, it creates an argument in your defense.

Kiddushin 40b - view yourself as having equal amounts of good deeds and bad deeds and this one good deed could tip the scales of Divine Justice toward acquittal.

Avos 4:13:11-12

[13] *Rabbi Eliezer ben Yaakov said: He who fulfills even a single mitzvah gains himself a single advocate, and he who commits even a single transgression gains himself a single accuser. Repentance and good deeds are like a shield against retribution.*

(יג) רבי אליעזר בן יעקב אומר: העושה מצוה אחת קונה לו פרקליט אחד; והעובר עברה אחת, קונה לו קטיגור אחד. תשובה ומעשים טובים כתרסיס בפני הפרענות.

A single advocate

In Chullin 7b we learn that a Mitzvah you do unwillingly is still considered holy let us explain.

Every Mitzvah creates an angel. The performance of the good deed creates the “body”, so to speak, of the angel. The person’s good intention imbues the angel with a “soul”.

Some people want to, for example, give charity but they don’t have the means; others have the means but don’t want to give. Since we are all considered the same organism responsible for one another the well intentioned person creates the soul and the unwilling one joins to create the body and together they make a complete angel.

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Avos 4:13:13-19

[13] *Rabbi Eliezer ben Yaakov said: He who fulfills even a single mitzvah gains himself a single advocate, and he who commits even a single transgression gains himself a single accuser. Repentance and good deeds are like a shield against retribution.*

[יג] רבי אליעזר בן יעקב אומר: העושה מצוה אחת קונה לו פרקליט אחד; והעובר עברה אחת, קונה לו קטיגור אחד. תשובה ומעשים טובים כתריס בפני הפרענות.

And he who commits even a single transgression gains himself a single accuser.

Sotah 3a - a man's spiritual flaws accuse him before the Heavenly tribunal.

Rashi - the word 'katagur' is a contraction of the words 'koreh tagur', "one who issues a challenge".

Tiferes Yisroel- 'Katagus' comes from the Greek, categoris – complainant.

Rambam - 'Katagus' is "a tale bearer", telling the King about disloyal subjects.

Meiri – Midrash Schmu'el - every Mitzvah is rewarded every transgression punished.

The numerical value of 'Sanegur', "defense attorney" 329, is one more than 'Kategur' 328, "prosecutor". A person needs one more merit to outweigh his demerits and gain him acquittal. It is this one additional Mitzvah to which our Mishnah refers.

[13] *Rabbi Eliezer ben Yaakov said: He who fulfills even a single mitzvah gains himself a single advocate, and he who commits even a single transgression gains himself a single accuser. Repentance and good deeds are like a shield against retribution.*

(וג) רבי אליעזר בן יעקב אומר: העושה מצוה אחת קונה לו פרקליט אחד; והעובר עברה אחת, קונה לו קטיגור אחד. תשובה ומעשים טובים כתריס בפני הפרענות.

A single accuser

A man came to his neighbor and told him. “I understand you spoke Lashon Hara about me”.
Shocked the man asked, “who told you”. The other responded, “an angel told me”.

“Since when do angels speak Lashon Hara?”

“Some do”, he answered, “Every time a person does a good deed he gives birth to a good angel and every time he sins he creates an evil angel. The evil angel you created when you spoke slanderously against me is the very one who told me. Evil angels, like their creators, are not afraid of sinning by Lashon Hara.

Avos 4:13:20-25

[13] *Rabbi Eliezer ben Yaakov said: He who fulfills even a single mitzvah gains himself a single advocate, and he who commits even a single transgression gains himself a single accuser. Repentance and good deeds are like a shield against retribution.*

[יג] רבי אליעזר בן יעקב אומר: העושה מצוה אחת קונה לו פרקליט אחד; והעובר עברה אחת, קונה לו קטיגור אחד. תשובה ומעשים טובים כתריס בפני הפרענות.

Repentance and good deeds are like shields against retribution.

R Yosef - Note the order of the words. Repentance is mentioned before good deeds because the repentant are deemed to be of greater spiritual standing than those who are occupied with good deeds (Berachos 35b).

Baal HaTanya – repentance closes the chasm created by sin between man and his maker it brings them closer. Good deeds are then able to create a true Godly connection.

Avos 4:14:5-11

[14] Rabbi Yochanan the Sandler said: Every assembly that is dedicated to the sake of Heaven will have an enduring effect, but one that is not for the sake of Heaven will not have an enduring effect.

(יד) רבי יוחנן הסנדלר אומר: כל כנסיה שהיא לשם שמים, סופה להתקיים; ושאינה לשם שמים, אין סופה להתקיים.

Every assembly that is dedicated to the sake of Heaven will have an enduring effect.

What is an assembly dedicated to the sake of Heaven? Any gathering convened in order to advance the cause of Torah study or performance of Mitzvos.

A business gathering conducted in a spirit of honesty and ethics qualifies. However, even spiritual gatherings must not be tainted by self aggrandisement. The word “gathering” ‘Kenesiyah’ is a contraction of the words ‘Kanas and Yah’ “Godly gathering”.

Avos 4:14:10-11

[14] Rabbi Yochanan the Sandler said: Every assembly that is dedicated to the sake of Heaven will have an enduring effect, but one that is not for the sake of Heaven will not have an enduring effect.

(יד) רבי יוחנן הסנדלר אומר: כל כנסיה שהיא לשם שמים, סופה להתקים; ושאינה לשם שמים, אין סופה להתקים.

Will have an enduring effect.

Rashi - its resolutions will come to fruition.

R Meir Zlotowitz - They will succeed in their undertaking.

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Avos 4:14:12-17

[14] Rabbi Yochanan the Sandler said: Every assembly that is dedicated to the sake of Heaven will have an enduring effect, but one that is not for the sake of Heaven will not have an enduring effect.

[יד] רבי יוחנן הסנדלר אומר: כל כנסיה שהיא לשם שמים, סופה להתקיים; ושאין לה לשם שמים, אין סופה להתקיים.

But one that is not for the sake of Heaven will not survive.

Avos d'Rebbi Nosson - a unity not for the sake of Heaven is found in Gen 11:1-9 regarding the tower of Babel. Their ungodly unity was disrupted by God causing them to speak many languages resulting in a breakdown of communication and general dispersion (Akeidas Yitzchak).

[טו] רבי אלעזר בן שמעון אומר: יהי כבוד תלמידך חביב עליך כשלך; וכבוד חברך כמורא רבך; ומורא רבך כמורא שמים.
 [15] Rabbi Elazar ben Shamua said: Let the honor of your student be as dear to you as your own; the honor of your colleague as the reverence for your teacher; and the reverence for your teacher as the reverence of Heaven.

Let the honor of your student be as dear to you as your own.

If you want to bring out the best in your student:

R.S.R. Hirsch – never degrade or injure the dignity of a disciple.

Irving Bunim – do not overpower your students with a sense of your brilliance compared with their ignorance.

Rashi - your student's accomplishments reflect your efforts in teaching. Consider his prestige as if it were your own.

Rav - We can learn the proper relation between pupil and teacher when Moshe Rabbeinu said in Ex 17:9 to Joshua, not “choose men for me” but rather “let us choose men”.

Rambam - students are like your children who give you pleasure in this world as well as in the world to come.

Taanis 7a - one can often learn more from students than from colleagues.

Avos 4:15:16-19

[טו] רבי אלעזר בן שמוע אומר: יהי כבוד תלמידך חביב עליך כשלך; וכבוד חברך כמוך רבך; ומורא רבך כמוך שמים.

[15] Rabbi Elazar ben Shamua said: Let the honor of your student be as dear to you as your own; the honor of your colleague as the reverence for your teacher; and the reverence for your teacher as the reverence of Heaven.

And reverence for your teacher as the reverence for Heaven.

Deut 6:13 “ET Hashem Elokecho Terah”.

R Akiva - interprets the “ET”, an extra word, as indicating that Torah Scholars should also be feared.

Bava Kamma 41b - One achieves life in the world to come through the teachings of scholars.

Rav - in Numbers 11:28 - Joshua suggested that Eldad and Meldad deserved to die since their revolt against Moses was tantamount to a revolt against God.

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Avos 4:16:4-6

[טז] רבי יהודה אומר: הוי זהיר בתלמוד, ששגגת תלמוד עולה ודון.
[16] Rabbi Yehudah said: Be meticulous in study, for a careless misinterpretation is considered tantamount to willful transgression.

Be meticulous in study.

Rashi, Ran - Be sure you fully understand the ideas and their halachic ramifications.

R Yonah - This means constant review since forgetfulness causes issues to become unclear.

Meiri - especially if you will transfer your learning to halachic decisions.

Midrash Shmuel - Be meticulous with a student. Teach him as he needs to be taught so there is no room for misunderstanding.

Avos 4:16:7-10

[16] Rabbi Yehudah said: Be meticulous in study, for a careless misinterpretation is considered tantamount to willful transgression.

[טז] רבי יהודה אומר: הוי זהיר בתלמוד, ששגגת תלמוד עולה זדון.

Careless misinterpretation is considered willful transgression.

Rashi, Rav – one who studies superficially is bound to make mistakes.

Meiri - error is common among human beings. Take extra precaution by reviewing what you have learned. Don't give mistaken advice to others, it is a stumbling block. Halachic decisions are a great responsibility.

Midrash Shmuel - a student's mistake might be traced to imperfect teaching by his teacher. The student's inadvertent sins can be viewed as a willful transgression by a teacher who might have known that his lesson lacked clarity or understanding by the student.

Taam Zekeinim - Ignorance is not bliss. An ignorant person is responsible for not studying and also for the sin itself. He is in double jeopardy.

People learn from the actions and behavior of the Torah Scholars so they must be careful not to teach improperly by their actions.

Avos 4:17:4-12

[17] Rabbi Shimon said: There are three crowns – the crown of Torah, the crown of priesthood, and the crown of kingship; but the crown of a good name surpasses them all.

[יז] רבי שמעון אומר: שלשה כתרִים הם: כתר תורה, וכתר כהונה, וכתר מלכות; וכתר שם טוב עולה על גביהן.

There are three crowns, the crowns of Torah, priesthood and kingship.

Rashi - These are not all attainable. You can't earn the crown of priesthood if you are not a Kohen or of Malchus if you are not from the family of King David but we all can earn the crown of Torah. To study it, teach it and live it.

Abarbanel - Notice that the crown of Torah is listed first because it takes precedence, It contains both the commandments between God and man as well as those between man and man. The crown of the priesthood is between man and God and of Kingship between man and man.

Rambam - Hilchos Talmud Torah 3:6. One who pursues the crown of Torah should not lose even one night to sleep, food, drink, or engage in idle talk etc, but should be involved only in Torah Study.

Horayos 13a - A king or a high priest who dies is replaced. A Torah Scholar is an irreplaceable loss.

Avos 4:17:13-18

[17] *Rabbi Shimon said: There are three crowns – the crown of Torah, the crown of priesthood, and the crown of kingship; but the crown of a good name surpasses them all.*

[יז] רבי שמעון אומר: שלשה כתרין הם: כתר תורה, וכתר כהונה, וכתר מלכות; וכתר שם טוב עולה על גביהן.

But the crown of a good name surpasses them all.

So there are really four crowns.

R Moshe Alshakar - This fourth is not numbered as are the other three to show it is in a class by itself.

Moed Katan 17a - If a scholar behaves in an uncouth manner he is despised. A good name is needed even if you are a Torah Scholar. All the crowns also require the crown of a good name.

Bigdei Meshi - The priesthood is inherited, the Kingship is appointed, intelligence to understand your studies in a Heavenly gift. It is only a good name that a person earns for himself.

Koheles Rabbah 7:3 - A good name is more precious than the Holy Ark. The Ark preceded before the Israelites in the wilderness (p263). A person's good name precedes him all over the world.

Avos 4:18:4-7

[יח] רבי נהוראי אומר: הוי גולה למקום תורה, ואל תאמר שהיא
תבוא אחריה, שהבריה יקיימה בידה. ואל בינתה אל תשען.¹
(18) Rabbi Nehorai said: Exile yourself to a place of Torah – and do not
assume that it will come after you – for it is your colleagues who will
cause it to remain with you; 'and do not rely on your own understanding.'

Exile yourself to a place of Torah.

Rashi, Rav - If there are no scholars where you live move to a place where you will find such mentors.

Rambam - Seek out a place where many study so you can find study partners.

Tiferes Yisroel - Even if ample opportunity to study is in your town you should move away.

Midrash Shmuel - Like a plant that flourishes only after it is uprooted and replanted in a new place, moving to a new place allows the development of character and insures success in one's studies. It is worthwhile to substitute temporary comforts for eternal reward.

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Avos 4:18:8-12

[18] Rabbi Nehorai said: Exile yourself to a place of Torah – and do not assume that it will come after you – for it is your colleagues who will cause it to remain with you; 'and do not rely on your own understanding.'

[יח] רבי נהוראי אומר: הוי גולה למקום תורה, ואל תאמר שהיא תבוא אחריך, שחבריך יקיימיה בידך. ואל בינתך אל תשען.

And don't assume that it will come after you.

Rashi, Rav - Don't stay in a place, devoid of adequate Torah Scholars or personalities, on the assumption that they will eventually move there to you.

Meiri - Even a day outside a proper environment is time irretrievably lost.

Art Scroll p265

Avos 4:18:13-15

[18] Rabbi Nehorai said: Exile yourself to a place of Torah – and do not assume that it will come after you – for it is your colleagues who will cause it to remain with you; 'and do not rely on your own understanding.'¹

(יח) רבי נהוראי אומר: הוי גולה למקום תורה, ואל תאמר שהיא תבוא אחריי, שחבריך יקיימיה בידך. ואל בינתך אל תשעין.

For it is your colleagues who will cause it to remain with you.

Sefer Ha Mussar - Torah studied with companions is more firmly mastered for colleagues challenge one another and through such discussion better understanding develops.

Shabbos 147b - Rabbi Elazar ben Arach, AKA Nehorai, moved to a city that was not a place of learning and forgot all he had learned and became an ignorant person. His former colleagues prayed for him and his learning was restored. He is the one who taught us this dictum.

Art Scroll p265

[18] Rabbi Nehorai said: Exile yourself to a place of Torah – and do not assume that it will come after you – for it is your colleagues who will cause it to remain with you; 'and do not rely on your own understanding.'¹

[יח] רבי נהוראי אומר: הוי גולה למקום תורה, ואל תאמר שהיא תבוא אחריך, שחברריך יקימוה בידך. ואל בינתך אל תשען.¹

And do not rely on your own understanding (Proverbs 3:5)

Rashi - No one can understand Torah with his own intelligence exclusively. He needs a mentor. He must keep asking and learning.

Midrash Shmuel - One learns from books facts and details. One learns from a teacher good conduct and correct thinking.

R Yisroel Salanter says - A chassid believes that since he has a Rebbe he does not need books. A misnaged believes that since he has books he does not need a Rebbe. Both are wrong. Both need both.

Avos 4:19:4-12

[19] Rabbi Yannai said: It is not in our power to explain either the tranquility of the wicked or the suffering of the righteous.

[יט] רבי ינאי אומר: אין בידינו לא משלות הרשעים ואף לא מיסורי הצדיקים.

It is not in our power to explain the tranquility of the wicked or the suffering of the righteous.

Why do bad things happen to good people? R. Harold Kushner

Rav, R'Yonah - God has good reasons for allowing both but we, with limited intelligence, can view only small parts of the flow of life.

R.S.R. Hirsch - It is beyond our power to determine a person's moral worth or his motivations. We may think someone is evil but God rewards him. Perhaps he is really good or vice versa.

Chiddusei Harim lost all 13 of his children during his lifetime. His wife commented, "perhaps God in his mercy has allowed us to be a source of comfort to others. Parents suffer the heartbreak of the loss of a child and they can say look at Yitchok Meir and his wife, they lost 13, have you suffered so much?"

Avos 4:19:4-12 (continued)

[19] Rabbi Yannai said: It is not in our power to explain either the tranquility of the wicked or the suffering of the righteous.

[וט] רבי ינאי אומר: אין בידנו לא משלות הרשעים ואף לא מוסורי הצדיקים.

Genesis 38:7 “But Er, Judah’s first born, was wicked in the sight of the Lord and the Lord slew him”.

God is a righteous judge who gives people exactly what they deserve. By saying that we keep the world orderly and understandable. But he teaches people to blame themselves and creates guilt where none belongs.

The Bridge of San Luis Rey by Hemingway. 5 people cross a bridge which breaks and they all die. Sheer accident? God’s will? Were they guilty?

How about 250 people are on airplane – all guilty?

We see bad things do happen to good people. Is this justice?

Are we willing to say: they only look like good people to us humans. Like a beautiful tapestry. But on the other side it is not beautiful or good and only God knows how bad and how deserving of punishment that person was.

Avos 4:19:4-12 (continued)

[19] Rabbi Yannai said: It is not in our power to explain either the tranquility of the wicked or the suffering of the righteous.

[יט] רבי ינאי אומר: אין בידינו לא משלוחת הרשעים ואף לא מוסורי הצדיקים.

Is it good for people to die? If people did not die:

1. Humanity would be deprived of a fresh start.
2. The world would be over crowded and we ourselves would probably never have been born.

Everything that happens in life is for a good purpose. Can you tell this to a person who has been struck by a tragedy?

Is this explanation helpful to us or is it a defense of our concept of God and an attempt to defend His terrible decisions.

We deserve what we get.

It is a punishment for our sins.

It is a cure for our faults. Perhaps you were proud, or arrogant or impatient,

It is punishment for every time we told a lie or ignored a begger or had a mean or vindictive thought!!

Avos 4:19:4-12 (continued)

[19] Rabbi Yannai said: It is not in our power to explain either the tranquility of the wicked or the suffering of the righteous.

[יט] רבי ינאי אומר: אין בידינו לא משלוחת הרשעים ואף לא מוסורי הצדיקים.

If the Jews acted differently there would be no antisemitism.

Hitler would not have killed them.

If the person worked harder he would not be poor.

If the girl had not dressed provocatively she would not have been raped.

Blaming the victim makes us believe the world is not as bad a place as it may seem.

It helps fortunate people believe that their good fortune is deserved because of their true qualities rather than being a matter of luck. It makes everyone feel better.

Except the victim. Who not only suffers but has public condemnation on top of his original misfortune.

Avos 4:19:4-12 (continued)

[19] *Rabbi Yannai said: It is not in our power to explain either the tranquility of the wicked or the suffering of the righteous.*

[יט] רבי ינאי אומר: אין בידנו לא משלות הרשעים ואף לא מיסורי הצדיקים.

We assume that God is the cause of our suffering

Is it for our own good?

Is it punishment we deserve?

Perhaps God does not care what happens to us?

Should we hate ourselves for deserving such a fate?

Should we hate God for sending it to us when we don't deserve it?

But perhaps God does not cause our suffering.

God is powerful he does not need to be fair.

God is too busy.

Perhaps God is a good God but not totally powerful or a powerful God who is not totally good.

God asks us, “do you think it is easy to keep unfair things from happening to people??” Even God seems to have a tough time keeping chaos in check.

Ask instead not “God why are you doing this to me”, but “dear God see what a problem I have will you please help me?”

[20] *Rabbi Masya ben Charash said: Initiate a greeting to every person; and be a tail to lions rather than a head to foxes.*

[ב] רבי מתיא בן חרש אומר: הוי מקדים בשלום כל אדם, והוי זנב לאריות, ואל תהי ראש לשועלים.

On meeting any man be the first to extend greetings.

Irving Bunim - Either from petty conceit or from a sense of insecurity some people will hesitate to be the first to extend a warm greeting to those they meet. This is wrong behavior.

Berachos 17a - It was said of R Yochanian ben Zakkai that no man ever gave him greeting first.

Maharab - you should greet even a wicked person.

He does not consider himself wicked and will feel himself unfairly insulted if he is ignored and it will cause animosity. Art Scroll p268

Meiri - By initiating greetings one elicits much love. One must not only love his fellow man but he must be beloved by them. Greet everyone, even enemies. Take the initiative in pursing (Shalom) people and they will eventually respond in kind.

Toldos Yaakov – ‘Makdim’ - give precedence to others even before your own well being.

[כ] רבי מתיא בן חרש אומר: הוי מקדים בשלום כל אדם, והוי זנב לאריות, ואל תהי ראש לשועלים.

[20] *Rabbi Masya ben Charash said: Initiate a greeting to every person; and be a tail to lions rather than a head to foxes.*

Be a tail to lions and not a head to foxes.

Is it better to be a big fish in a small pond or a small fish in a big pond?

Rashi - It is better for a person to be a disciple of someone who is wiser than he who could lead to his improvement rather than the master of someone who is inferior to him and will lead to his deterioration.

Sanhedrin 37a - A new member was chosen from the highest ranking member of a lower court. Thus, the new member formerly the head of foxes now became the tail of lions. It is preferable to be the least distinguished member or an elite group than to be the most distinguished member of a lesser group.

Avos 4:21:4-10

[21] Rabbi Yaakov said: This world is like a lobby before the World to Come;
prepare yourself in the lobby so that you may enter the banquet hall.

[כא] רבי יעקב אומר: העולם הזה דומה לפרוזדור בפני העולם הבא,
התקן עצמך בפרוזדור, כדי שתכנס לטרקלין.

This world is like a vestibule, (lobby portico) before the world to come.

Avodah Zarah 3a - one who does good in this world will be able to enjoy the reward of the world of eternity.

Hadar HaCarmel - If one prepares properly here, then the world to come is like a banquet hall.

Avos 4:21:11-13

[21] *Rabbi Yaakov said: This world is like a lobby before the World to Come; prepare yourself in the lobby so that you may enter the banquet hall.*

[כא] רבי יעקב אומר: העולם הזה דומה לפרוזדור בפני העולם הבא, התקן עצמך בפרוזדור, כדי שתכנס לטרקלין.

Three heroes were rewarded by the King with unlimited access to his treasury for 1 day to take all they wanted. They were invited to a lavish party. One of the heroes said to himself, “What do I care about that party I have only a limited time to gather these riches”, and he devoted himself to that task and gathered enough for a rich life. The second hero was attracted to the party. Food, drink, fun, jokes, camaraderie and spent much of the day there. Only later in the day he recalled the rapidly vanishing opportunity for riches. The third hero was so engrossed in food, drink and reveling that he got drunk, passed out and only awoke after the time to gather the treasure was past.

So it is in life. We have the opportunity to devote ourselves to the important tasks in life. Some do so with great concentration. Others realize later in life that they wasted valuable time and opportunity and only then try to make up for lost time. And some spend their entire life at the party not coming to their senses until it is too late and they return home or to their maker empty handed.

[כב] הוא היה אומר: יפה שעה אחת בתשובה ומעשים טובים בעולם הזה מכל חיי העולם הבא; ויפה שעה אחת של קורת רוח בעולם הבא מכל חיי העולם הזה.

[22] He used to say: Better one hour of repentance and good deeds in This World than the entire life of the World to Come; and better one hour of spiritual bliss in the World to Come than the entire life of This World.

Better an hour of repentance and good deeds in this world than a lifetime in the world to come.

R Chaim Shmulevitz – the pleasure in the world to come consists of the closeness to the Almighty based on your achievements in this world.

Vilna Gaon – cried on his death bed that he would soon not be able to perform any Mitzvot as he moved from this world into the next.

R Abraham Chaim Feuer – a person who knows himself cannot fail to repent.

Eruvin 22a - Today, this world, was made to perform Mitzvos, not tomorrow, the world to come.

[בג] רבי שמעון בן אלעזר אומר: אל תרצה את חברך בשעת כעסו; ואל תנחמהו בשעה שמתו מטל לפניו; ואל תשאל לו בשעת נדרו; ואל תשתדל לראותו בשעת קלקלתו.

[23] Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar says: Do not appease your fellow in the time of his anger; do not console him while his dead lies before him; do not question him about his vow at the time he makes it; and do not attempt to see him at the time of his degradation.

Do not appease your fellow at the time of his anger.

Rambam - timing is a key to improving interpersonal affairs.

Rashi - an angry person should be left alone to calm down.

Yevamos 65b - just as one is commanded to speak up when his words will be listened to, so it is a Mitzvah to remain silent when he will not be listened to.

Beis Avos - The one who tries to appease an angry person will become discouraged by his lack of success and not want to try again.

R Nissan Alpert - notes that on the other hand to allow anger to fester permits it to multiply and become worse. This extra hatred caused by animosity permitted to deepen without cause is the true meaning of ‘senas chinam’ “causeless hatred”.

[23] Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar says: Do not appease your fellow in the time of his anger; do not console him while his dead lies before him; do not question him about his vow at the time he makes it; and do not attempt to see him at the time of his degradation.

[בג] רבי שמעון בן אלעזר אומר: אל תרצה את חברך בשעת כעסו;
ואל תנחמהו בשעה שמתו מטל לפניו; ואל תשאל לו בשעת
נדרו; ואל תשמדל לראותו בשעת קלקלחו.

Do not console him while his dead lies before him.

Rashi - Only later can he be consoled and comforted.

R Yonah - He may feel that the comforter does not understand the severity of his loss and may lash out against the comforter and toward the true judge.

Lev Avos - Mourning and grief are beneficial and should not be interrupted prematurely.

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[בג] רבי שמעון בן אלעזר אומר: אל תרצה את חברך בשעת כעסו; ואל תנחמהו בשעה שמתו מטל לפניו; ואל תשאל לו בשעת נדרו; ואל תשמדל לראותו בשעת קלקלתו.

Don't question him at the time of his vow.

Rashi - Do not question the circumstances of the vow. He is too emotional. Do not inquire about the terms of the vow, he may make it unconditional and ruin any possibility of annulment. If it is a vow to do a good deed do not demand that it be done immediately. Such pressure may cause him to regret having made the vow in the first place.

Midrash Schmuel - do not ask a donor to support a second cause at the time of his initial vow.

Rabbeinu Ephraim - suggests this means if one has severed ties with a friend by means of a vow don't request resumption of the friendship immediately. Wait awhile for emotions to calm down.

[23] Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar says: Do not appease your fellow in the time of his anger; do not console him while his dead lies before him; do not question him about his vow at the time he makes it; and do not attempt to see him at the time of his degradation.

[בג] רבי שמעון בן אלעזר אומר: אל תרצה את חבֵרְךָ בשַׁעַת בְּעָסוֹ;
וְאל תנַחֲמֵהוּ בַשָּׁעָה שִׁמְתוֹ מָטֹל לִפְנָיו; וְאל תִּשְׁאַל לוֹ בַשָּׁעָה
נִדְרוֹ; וְאל תִּשְׁתַּדֵּל לִרְאוֹתוֹ בַּשָּׁעָה קִלְקַלְתּוֹ.

And don't attempt to see him at the time of his degradation.

Rashi - The person is overcome with shame.

Maharam Schick: Don't attempt to chastise at the time a person sins. The heat of the moment may make your words or his receptivity to your words less than ideal. It is a Mitzvah not to utter words of rebuke that will not be heard (Yevamos 65b).

Sefer HaMussar - A person's pain may be compounded when others witness his suffering.

[25] Elisha ben Avuya said: One who studies Torah as a child, to what can he be likened? – to ink written on fresh paper. And one who studies Torah as an old man, to what can he be likened? – to ink written on smudged paper.

[כה] אֱלִישָׁע בֶּן אֲבוּיָה אָמַר: הַלּוֹמֵד יְלֵד, לָמָּה הוּא דוֹמָה? לְדִין כְּתוּבָה עַל נֶיֶר חָדָשׁ. וְהַלּוֹמֵד זָקֵן, לָמָּה הוּא דוֹמָה? לְדִין כְּתוּבָה עַל נֶיֶר מְחֻק.

He who studies as a child to what may he be likened?

To ink written on fresh paper.

And one who studies as an old man to what may he be likened? To ink written on erased paper.

R' Chaim of Volozhin – nevertheless, the studies of an old man may leave a trace even on erased paper since better ink is used i.e., he has better concentration and greater devotion.

R' Pinchas Shapiro – why discourage the older man? Even an older person can learn as well as a child if he puts forth the necessary concentration.

[26] Rabbi Yose bar Yehudah of Kfar HaBavli says: One who learns Torah from the young, to what can he be likened? – to one who eats unripe grapes or drinks unfermented wine from his vat. But one who learns Torah from the old, to what can he be likened? – to one who eats ripe grapes or drinks aged wine.

[כז] רבי יוסי בר יהודה איש כפר הבבלי אומר: הלומד מן הקטנים, למה הוא דומה? לאוכל ענבים קהות, ושותה יין מגתו. והלומד מן הזקנים, למה הוא דומה? לאוכל ענבים בשולות, ושותה יין ישן.

One who learns from a young teacher to what can he be likened?

The previous Mishnah discusses students of different ages; this Mishnah discusses teachers of different ages.

To one who eats unripened grapes they have a bitter taste and are unappetizing much like the product of unripened thought.

Unfermented wine contains sediment in it. The thinking is not clarified. It may initially taste good but eventually causes a stomach ache.

Kozhnitzer Maggid - A student who looks up to his teacher as a wise elder will savor his intoxicating teachings not so if he considers him his peer.

BT Moed Kattan 17a - consider your teacher as compared to an Angel of God. If not do not learn from him.

[27] Rabbi Meir says: Do not look at the vessel, but what is in it; there is a new vessel filled with old wine and an old vessel that does not even contain new wine.

[בז] רבי מאיר אומר: אל תסתכל בקנקן, אלא במה שיש בו; יש קנקן חדש מלא ישן, וישן שאפילו חדש אין בו.

Do not look at the vessel but what is in it.

Rav, R' Yonah - Look at each individual separately. Don't draw conclusions based merely an age.

Don't be deceived by appearances. Look past the exterior of a person and seek out the essential character.

Pesachim 111b - Bava Kamma 117a - A person may appear learned and in fact may not be.

Taanis 22a - A person may appear wicked and may really be righteous.

Rashi - There are young men whose insight and level of learning surpass that of their seniors. Wisdom is not a property of years but is a gift from God who may grant it to whomever he wishes.

R Yosef Karo - even to a youngster.

Don't judge a book by its cover.

Avos 4:28:5-12
Weiss #654

[28] Rabbi Elazar HaKappar says: Jealousy, lust and glory remove a man from the world.

[כח] רבי אלעזר הקפר אומר: הקנאה והתאווה והכבוד מוציאים את האדם מן העולם.

Envy, lust and thirst for honor remove the man from the world.

R'S.R. Hirsch - These vices are selfish and serve only the person who has them and therefore they separate him from the rest of the world.

R' Yisroel Salanter - This maxim is directed to 'ha Adam' "the man", with a definite article 'heh'. This indicates that even the loftiest of men is liable to fall into the trap of envy, lust and desire for honor.

Avos 4:28:5-7, 8-12

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Jealousy, lust and glory

Jealousy - Parshas Korach - jealous of Aaron.

Desire - Parshas BeHaalosecha - The Israelites longed for the products of Egypt.

And the quest for honor - Parshas Shelach - The spies feared that their leadership status would diminish in Israel and therefore spoke disparagingly of the land of Israel.

Remove the individual from the world. 4:28:8-12

The juxtaposition of these three parshiot depict the tangible portrayal of this aphorism.

Meam Loez 14: XII Introduction

Avos 4:28:5

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Jealousy - May be a positive force.

Bava Basra 21a - Rivalry between scholars increases wisdom.

Proverbs 14:30 - “Envy causes the decay of bones”, King Solomon .

Envy penetrates to and corrodes the inner being of a person. Recall the story of Korach who was jealous of the position of Moses and Aaron.

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Avos 4:28:6

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Lust

Vilna Gaon - lust – indulging it is like saltwater, the more you drink of it the thirstier you get.

Succah 52b - Starve it and it is satisfied; satisfy it and it is starved.

Rashi - recall the desire of Adam and Eve for the forbidden fruit.

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Glory

R' Moshe Chaim Luzzatto - glory – honor – are nothing but pure vanity.

The praise of men is a burden.

The desire for honor entraps a person.

Sanhedrin 102a - pursuit of honor forces a person to spend more on housing clothes etc, than he can easily afford and then struggle to keep up the appearance.

R' Chaim of Volozhin - suggest that these three vices are in chronological order. From birth one suffers from jealousy. Lust develops at maturity. Desire for honor occurs as one gets older and physical pleasures are less important.

Avos 4:28:8-12

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Remove a man from the world.

Jealousy, lust and the pursuit of glory lead to sin and through them a person will lose his share in the world to come.

The King offered a jealous man anything he desires with the understanding that his rival would be given twice as much.

He could not bring himself to ask for gold or a big house etc, knowing the other would get twice as much. Jealousy would not allow him to do so. He asked for the King to gouge out one of his eyes so the other would lose both of his. Jealousy is the root of gossip, tale bearing and revenge.

Pursuit of glory. A sense of self importance does not allow a person to feel humility such that he could repent and ask another person or even God for forgiveness,

Jealousy can result in paranoia which imagines a demon in every corner.

Lust can induce a person to destroy his life and career for a cheap thrill.

Glory when sought too vigorously can foster delusions of grandeur. One who suffers from the triple curses of these crippling spiritual diseases becomes so egocentric everyone around him ceases to exist. He is removed from this world.

Avos 4:28:5-7

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Jealousy, lust, glory

The same vices of jealousy, lust and glory can be directed constructively.

Envy of those who do good deeds may stimulate us to emulate them.

Passion toward one's endeavors will result in greater achievements.

Honor – given by you to others is an effective passage to the World to Come,

Kozhinitzer Maggid

Art Scroll p287

[29] *He used to say: The newborn will die; the dead will live again; the living will be judged – in order that they know, teach, and become aware that He is God, He is the Fashioner, He is the Creator, He is the Discerner, He is the Judge, He is the Witness, He is the Plaintiff, He will judge. Blessed is He, before Whom there is no iniquity, no forgetfulness, no favoritism, and no acceptance of bribery, for everything is His. Know that everything is according to the reckoning. And let not your evil inclination promise you that the grave will be an escape for you – for against your will you were created; against your will you were born; against your will you live; against your will you die, and against your will you are destined to give an account before the King Who rules over kings, the Holy One, Blessed is He.*

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The newborn will die. :4-5

R; Yonah-this is a call for repentance.

Life is a fatal disease.

The human is approaching death as soon as he/she is born.

Stop and take stock of your spiritual life.

The dead will live again. :6-7

Resurrection of the dead is a cardinal principle of Jewish belief (Sadducees vs Pharasees).

Avos 4:29:21-26.27-28

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He is the judge, the witness and the plaintiff. 21-26

He will judge 27:29

Blessed is He before whom there is no iniquity.

Rashi - God does not bend His judgement to favor anyone.

He rules according to the law and punishes with exact justice.

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There is no forgetfulness.

Whatever is forgotten here on earth is remembered in Heaven.

Whatever is remembered here on earth is forgotten in Heaven.

The sins a person did but forgot about will be remembered in Heaven,

He forgot them therefore, he did not repent.

Those sins he recalls and could therefore repent from, Heaven forgets those and no longer weighs them against him.

Good deeds that he forgot Heaven remembers.

Good deeds that he is arrogantly proud of and expects to be rewarded for is not counted on the positive side of his ledger.

As King David said, (Psalms 51:5) “my sin is always before me”. If a person adopts this attitude, then God is ready to forgive and forget his sin. If, however, he forgets his sins, thinking he has repented sufficiently, then God will remember those sins.

Avos 4:29:39-41

[29] *He used to say: The newborn will die; the dead will live again; the living will be judged – in order that they know, teach, and become aware that He is God, He is the Fashioner, He is the Creator, He is the Discerner, He is the Judge, He is the Witness, He is the Plaintiff, He will judge. Blessed is He, before Whom there is no iniquity, no forgetfulness, no favoritism, and no acceptance of bribery, for everything is His. Know that everything is according to the reckoning. And let not your evil inclination promise you that the grave will be an escape for you – for against your will you were created; against your will you were born; against your will you live; against your will you die, and against your will you are destined to give an account before the King Who rules over kings, the Holy One, Blessed is He.*

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And He shows no favoritism.

Rav - even a perfectly righteous person will be held accountable for his transgressions.

R' Yonah - great wisdom and piety does not absolve one from responsibility.

Rambam - No favoritism toward the rich and/or famous.

Avos 4:29:42-44

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And no acceptance of bribery.

Rambam - God does not accept performance of commandments as atonement for transgressions. We can't trade one for the other. He gives reward for Mitzvos and punishment for transgressions.

Repentance cannot be obtained by a trade off of good deeds for bad. True repentance is a process of internal metamorphosis when the penitent emerges as a new different person.

Rashi - everything is His, therefore, He cannot be bribed.

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Know that everything is according to the reckoning.

Rashi, Rav - Good or bad deeds are added up and kept track of.

Rambam - the term reckoning rather than added up is used to teach us that it is not mere mathematics. A person with greater intelligence, good character and abilities may receive greater punishment than a person with lesser qualities for a similar infraction.

Tiferes Yisroel - God considers all the circumstances surrounding a person's actions when he assesses reward and punishment.

Avos 4:29:62-65

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For against your will you were created.

Rashi, Rav - The soul is reluctant to descend from Heaven to earth.

Rashi Rav - The human fetus has a perfect existence. It is warm inside its mother fed by the umbilical cord and taught the entire Torah by an angel. When it comes time to be born it is reluctant to leave the protective, comfortable womb and must be forced to do so by an angel.

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And against your will you die.

Vilna Gaon Bava Basra 4a - If Reuven fences in his fields which almost surround an inner field owned by Shimon, Shimon need not share the expense even though he gains some protection because since his 4th side is open he is not really protected. However, if he himself fences in the 4th side he show that he wanted his field to be enclosed and He must share the cost with Reuven of the other 3 sides of the fence.

Therefore, even though we are coerced in to be created, born and live against our will, the fact that we struggle to stay alive and die against our will indicates that we should be responsible for our sins.

R	R
S	R
R	R

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And against your will you live.

[כט] הוא היה אומר: הילודים למות, והמתים לחיות, והחיים לדון – לידע להודיע ולהודיע שהוא אל, הוא היוצר, הוא הבורא, הוא המבין, הוא הדין, הוא העד, הוא בעל דין, הוא עתיד לדון. ברוך הוא, שאין לפניו לא עולה, ולא שכחה, ולא משוא פנים, ולא מקח שחד; שהכל שלו. ודע, שהכל לפי החשבון. ואל יבטיחך יצרך שהשואל בית מנוס לך – שעל ברחק אתה נוצר; ועל ברחק אתה נולד; ועל ברחק אתה חי; ועל ברחק אתה מת; ועל ברחק אתה עתיד לתן דין וחשבון לפני מלך מלכי המלכים, הקדוש ברוך הוא.

Rashi, Rav - man is often so debilitated by pain and woe that he may no longer wish to live. When he lies down to sleep at night his soul, aware of the terrible troubles he suffers, does not want God to return it to him in the morning but God does return the soul to man even against man's will.

Vilna Gaon - If a person is created against his will and he is born against his will and lives against his will he has good reason to question why he should have to pay for his misdeeds. After all, he was coerced to live. A blind man was married to an ugly woman and a deaf man was married to complaining woman and they had domestic bliss. One day a miracle working doctor offered to cure them of their maladies for a hefty fee. He did so and now the blind man could see his ugly wife and the deaf man was now able to hear his wife's curses. They both refused to pay the doctor. The judge ordered the doctor to return them to their former state but they refused saying this condition is better. "If so", said the judge, "you must pay the doctor". Even though you are created, born and live against your will, when you are faced with death you try to resist it.

Pirkei Avos

Chapter Five

[1] **בַּעֲשָׂרָה** *With ten utterances the world was created. What does this come to teach us? Indeed, could it not have been created with one utterance? This was to exact punishment from the wicked who destroy the world that was created with ten utterances, and to bestow goodly reward upon the righteous who sustain the world that was created by ten utterances.*

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The world was created by 10 statements.

Created – out of nothing Ex Nihilo.

Why 10 statements – God could have created the world with 1 statement – why did he use 10?

Answer: Because the world is very precious to Him. For example, a person could just say, “build me a house”, – or he could meet with the architect and builder personally, decide on the materials to be used etc. This would show how important the created house is to Him.

Abarbanel p317

Man was created last because – God was preparing the world for man – creating all the comforts and necessities for the benefit and pleasure of man.

Abarbanel p317

If God had created with 1 statement – he could destroy with 1 statement. The 10 step approach gives man ample warning to change his ways.

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With 10 utterances the world was created

1. In the beginning	1:1
2. light	1:3
3. firmament	1:6
4. waters and dry land	1:9
5. vegetation	1:11
6. luminaries	1:14
7. aquatic life	1:20
8. creatures on earth	1:24
9. man	1:26
10. herbage and trees	1:29

Vayomer is used only 9 times but the first word Bereshis is counted as an utterance.

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And what does this come to teach us?

Midrash Shmuel: Why are we told this detail?

R Yonah: Could God not have created the world with one utterance?

Rav: Could God not have created everything in one day rather than spread out the different elements of creation over a period of six days?

R Yitzchak Hutner - The 10 utterances establishes the principle of diversion. Not everything is equal, there are priorities, things that come first and things that come second etc.

Rambam - To teach man that there is unity despite the multiplicity and diversity, it does form on integrated whole. Ten- the Yud is small. It is a single point. It represents integrated unity. The world has separate parts but if you disrupt one part it is destroyed because it is an integrated unity.

Avos 5:1:13-15

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To exact punishment from the wicked.

Each of the 10 utterances teach us that every component part of the world is important.

Damage to any part of the world destroys it all, much as the dictum “whoever destroys one soul is considered to have destroyed an entire world” Sanhedrin 37a.

Rashi - Thus God can punish the wicked for destroying the world when they damage even a part of it. For example, a small piece of a puzzle, if missing, damages the entire puzzle. The absence of one letter in the Torah invalidates the entire Torah.

Ruach Chaim - Holds the contrasting view that it was God’s mercy that caused him to create the world in smaller units so that the wicked would not be able to ravage it completely for then they would be eternally indebted to God for wrecking such serious damage.

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To bestow goodly reward upon the righteous who sustain the world that was created with 10 utterances.

The diverse elements of creation give the opportunity to man to support and sustain an aspect of creation that resonates with his insight and personality. He may add to creation by being a farmer or one who raises animals or who is an environmentalist or a sailor on the seas. He may support the whales or give charity to the poor people. Every aspect of God's creation process can be supported by the righteous and the fact that there are many aspects give greater opportunity for the righteous to do so.

[2] *There were ten generations from Adam to Noah – to show the degree of His patience; for all those generations angered Him increasingly, until He brought upon them the waters of the Flood.*

[ב] עשרה דורות מאדם ועד נח, להודיע במה ארך אפים לפניו; שכל הדורות היו מבעיסין ובאין, עד שהביא עליהם את מי המבול.

The reason there were 10 generations from Adam to Noah and 10 generations from Noah to Abraham to show how great was God's patience.

The people were wicked and God wanted to give them a chance to repent and to give birth to righteous descendants. Adam, created in utter perfection, had only a few commandments. Yet he failed. God was patient through 10 generations but then finally brought the flood. Noah - virtuous comparatively. The later 10 generations could have learned from Noah's example, but did not.

Abraham - saved his generation and laid the ground work for the survival of mankind.

Adam represents the physical emergence of a person.

Noah represents the spirit of justice and conscience. No need to destroy the animal world.

Abraham - represents the preeminence of intellect, which was used to discover the concept of God.

[3] *There were ten generations from Noah to Abraham – to show the degree of His patience; for all those generations angered Him increasingly, until our forefather Abraham came and received the reward of them all.*

(ג) עשרה דורות מנח ועד אברהם, להודיע כמה ארך אפים לפניו; שכל הדורות היו מבעיסין ובאין, עד שבא אברהם אבינו וקבל שכר כלם.

Until our forefather Abraham came and received the reward of them all.

Rav – Abraham's good deeds equaled what could have been expected from the ten previous generations. He therefore received all the reward earmarked for them all that would have been theirs.

Rashi - Only Abraham was great enough to earn the reward of all the 10 generations. Noah was not sufficiently righteous to do so.

Tiferes Yisroel - Adam was at first created to receive the Torah, to live a sanctified life and implement God's will and to experience Godly revelation, and relationship. These could have been the privilege of all men. These gifts were now reserved for Abraham and his descendants.

Sefer HaMussar - God lavishes rewards on righteous people who come after generations of wicked people since they have rejected and overcome the bad influences of their environment.

[4] *Our forefather Abraham was tested with ten trials, and he withstood them all – to show the degree of our forefather Abraham's love for God.*

[ד] עֲשָׂרָה נִסְיוֹנוֹת נִתְּנָה אֲבִרָהּ אֲבִינוּ וְעָמַד בְּכֻלָּם, לְהוֹדִיעַ כְּמַה חֲבָתוֹ שֶׁל אֲבִרָהּ אֲבִינוּ.

The ten trials of Abraham

- | | |
|--|---------|
| 1. Move to Canaan | |
| 2. Move to Egypt | |
| 3. Bind Isaac on the alter | 22:1-2 |
| 4. Sarah taken to Pharaoh's palace | |
| Drive Hagar from your home | 21:10 |
| 5. Send Ishmael and Hagar away | 21:10 |
| 6. Sarah taken to Avimelech's palace | 20:2 |
| 7. War with the Kings | 14:14 |
| 8. His descendants would be slaves | 15:7-21 |
| 9. Thrown into Furnace by Nimrod – Rashi | 11:28 |
| 10. Circumcision | 17:9-11 |

Inspired by Abraham many have changed their place of abode to further religious ends.

Families move to cities with larger Jewish populations. Parents send children to study in Yei'hivos far away or experience Israel or Kibbutz life. All are emulating Abraham's journey to follow God's directive.

[4] *Our forefather Abraham was tested with ten trials, and he withstood them all – to show the degree of our forefather Abraham's love for God.*

[ד] עשרה נסיונות נתנסה אברהם אבינו ועמד בכלם, להודיע כמה חבתו של אברהם אבינו.

And he withstood all of them.

Rambam - why have a trial for Abraham let alone 10?

God knows what the person will do. God, it is said will never test a person beyond his capabilities so why put the person through such trials? Answer: to be able to reward the person for the actual performance of following God's mandate and for doing His will. Therefore, the trial is not for God to see what the person will do but is for the benefit of the person being tested.

Sforno - it provides the opportunity to translate feelings into action and to actualize the person's potential to raise one to a higher spiritual level.

Midrash Shmuel - Abraham 'Amad', "stood" stood firm during his many trials and tests.

[5] *Ten miracles were performed for our ancestors in Egypt and ten at the Sea.* *Ten plagues did the Holy One, Blessed is He, bring upon the Egyptians in Egypt and ten at the Sea.* [ה] עֲשָׂה נִסִּים וְנִעְשׂוּ לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ בְּמִצְרַיִם וְעֲשָׂה עַל הַיָּם. עֲשֶׂר מַכּוֹת הָבִיא הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא עַל הַמִּצְרַיִם בְּמִצְרַיִם וְעֲשֶׂר עַל הַיָּם.

Ten miracles were performed for our ancestors in Egypt.

Rambam, R Yonah - Each of the plagues (except lice) differentiated between the Israelites and the Egyptians. Once the forces of destruction are unleashed they do not usually differentiate between good people and bad people (B Kamma 60a). That is why you should not live next to or associate with bad people. It was a miracle that the Israelites were spared the sufferings from the plagues.

Denech Avos - Counts as the 10th miracle the fact that the Egyptians did not (could not) punish the Israelites for using their deity, the sheep, as a Pesach offering.

HaChassid Yaavetz - Points out that the miracle for the Israelites is mentioned before the punishment for the Egyptians because the purpose was not the punishment of the Egyptians but it was to clearly demonstrate Israel's chosenness and God's power in sparing them.

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Ten plagues did the Holy One, Blessed is He, bring upon the Egyptians in
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[ה] עֲשָׂה נִסִּים נַעֲשׂוּ לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ בְּמִצְרַיִם וְעֲשָׂה עַל הַיָּם. עֲשֶׂר מַכּוֹת
הָבִיא הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא עַל הַמִּצְרַיִם בְּמִצְרַיִם וְעֲשֶׂר עַל הַיָּם.

10 plaques that God did to the Egyptians in Egypt

1. blood 2. frogs 3. lice 4. wild animals 5. pestilence 6. boils
7. hailstones of fire 8. locusts 9. darkness 10. death of the first born
- and 10 at the Sea - Avos 5:5:18-20

Rashi, Rav - based on the Song of the Sea Ex 15:1-19.

1. He hurled horse and rider into the Sea.
- 2, He threw Pharaoh's chariots and army into the Sea.
3. They were mired in the Sea of Reeds.
4. Deep waters covered them.
5. They descended in the depths.
6. Gods right hand smashed the enemy.
7. He shattered the enemy.
8. He consumed them like straw.
9. The Sea enshrouded them.
10. The mighty sank like lead.

[5] *Ten miracles were performed for our ancestors in Egypt and ten at the Sea. Ten plagues did the Holy One, Blessed is He, bring upon the Egyptians in Egypt and ten at the Sea.* (ה) עֲשָׂרָה נִסִּים נַעֲשׂוּ לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ בְּמִצְרַיִם וְעֲשָׂרָה עַל הַיָּם. עֲשָׂר מַכּוֹת הָבִיא הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא עַל הַמִּצְרַיִם בְּמִצְרַיִם וְעֲשָׂר עַל הַיָּם.

And 10 at the sea (10 miracles at the Sea).

Rav, R' Yonah, Rambam, Avos d'Rabbi Nosson

1. The sea split
2. Tunnels were formed.
3. Sea bed was dry.
4. Sea bed turned to mud stopping the Egyptians.
5. Sea waters solidified like rock injuring the Egyptians.
6. The sea waters were shaped like smooth bricks for the Israelites.
7. 12 corridors were formed.
8. The walls were transparent.
9. The sweet water remained liquid for the Israelites.
10. Some of the sweet water froze for later Israelite use.

[6] With ten trials did our ancestors test the Holy One, Blessed is He, in the Wilderness, as it is said: 'They have tested Me these ten times and did not heed My voice.'¹ [ו] עֲשָׂרָה נִסְיוֹנוֹת נִסּוּ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ אֶת הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא בַּמִּדְבָּר, שְׁנֵאמַר: „וַיִּנְסוּ אֹתִי זֶה עֶשֶׂר פְּעָמִים, וְלֹא שָׁמְעוּ בְּקוֹלִי.”¹

With 10 trials did our ancestors test the Holy one Blessed be He, in the wilderness.

1. Prefer to live in Egypt as slaves than be pursued by Pharaoh Ex 14:11 and die in the wilderness.
2. Nothing to drink but bitter waters at Marah Ex 15:24.
3. Ran out of food Ex 16:3 and complained.
4. Left manna over though told not to do so Ex 16:20.
5. Tried to gather manna on Shabbos Ex 16:27.
6. Complained about lack of water at the Refidim Ex 17:2.
7. Worshipped the Golden Calf Ex 34:4.
8. Rebelled against God's commandments Num 11:1.
9. Complained that the manna was not good Num 11:4.
10. Believed the spies report about Eretz Yisroel Arachin 15a.

[6] *With ten trials did our ancestors test the Holy One, Blessed is He, in the Wilderness, as it is said: 'They have tested Me these ten times and did not heed My voice.'*¹

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They have tested me these 10 times and did not heed my voice (Num 14:22).

This pasuk teaches us about the miracles performed for us at the Exodus and at the splitting of the Reed Sea. Immediately after that it teaches us about the 10 trials the people were presented and shows that they failed the tests.

This tells us that experiencing miracles does not guarantee that we will have faith in the miracle worker. People delude themselves in thinking that if only God would show them a miracle they would believe more completely in Him. We see that is not necessarily true.

[7] *Ten miracles were performed for our ancestors in the Holy Temple: No woman miscarried because of the aroma of the sacrificial meat; the sacrificial meat never became putrid; no fly was seen in the place where the meat was butchered; no seminal emission occurred to the High Priest on Yom Kippur; the rains did not extinguish the fire on the altar-pyre; the wind did not disperse the vertical column of smoke from the altar; no disqualification was found in the Omer, or in the Two Loaves, or in the Showbread; the people stood crowded together, yet prostrated themselves in ample space; neither serpent nor scorpion ever caused injury in Jerusalem; nor did any man say to his fellow, 'The space is insufficient for me to stay overnight in Jerusalem.'*

[ז] עשרה נסים נעשו לאבותינו בבית המקדש: לא הפילה אשה מריח בשר הקדש; ולא הסריח בשר הקדש מעולם; ולא נראה זבוב בבית המטבחים; ולא אירע קרי לכהן גדול ביום הכפורים; ולא כבו הגשמים 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 לחברו: „צר לי המקום שאלין בירושלים.“

10 miracles were performed for our ancestors in the Holy Temple.

Tosphos Yom Tov - and these are listed in the Mishnah. In the previous Mishnayos a list was not needed because they are mentioned or alluded to in the Torah but these are not found in scripture and therefore must be listed for us.

Art Scroll 308

Avos 5:7:30-36

[7] Ten miracles were performed for our ancestors in the Holy Temple: No woman miscarried because of the aroma of the sacrificial meat; the sacrificial meat never became putrid; no fly was seen in the place where the meat was butchered; no seminal emission occurred to the High Priest on Yom Kippur; the rains did not extinguish the fire on the altar-pyre; the wind did not disperse the vertical column of smoke from the altar; no disqualification was found in the Omer, or in the Two Loaves, or in the Showbread; the people stood crowded together, yet prostrated themselves in ample space; neither serpent nor scorpion ever caused injury in Jerusalem; nor did any man say to his fellow, 'The space is insufficient for me to stay overnight in Jerusalem.'

[ז] עשרה נסים נעשו לאבותינו בבית המקדש: לא הפילה אשה מריח בשר הקדש; ולא הסריח בשר הקדש מעולם; ולא נראה זבוב בבית המטבחים; ולא אירע קרי לכהן גדול ביום הכפורים; ולא כבו הגשמים אש של עצי המערכה; ולא נצחה הרוח את עמוד העשן; ולא נמצא פסול בעמר, ובשתי הלחם, ובלחם הפנים; עומדים צפופים, ומשתחוים רוחים; ולא הויק נחש ועקרב בירושלים מעולם; ולא אמר אדם לחברו: „צר לי המקום שאלין בירושלים.”

God could have simply made a miracle, that it never rain over the site of the Temple and the alter. Why did he choose a miracle that it did rain but the fire did not go out? To teach us that Geshem, (rain), can homiletically be a reference to ‘gashmius’. Physicality, must never be permitted to extinguish our spirituality. Physical items can’t extinguish the flame of Torah commitment.

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When people stand tall and are egotistical they feel crowded. A humble person feels small and bends his wishes to the needs of others. Such people find there is ample room for everyone.

[8] Ten things were created on Sabbath eve, at twilight. They are: The mouth of the earth; the mouth of the well; the mouth of the donkey; the rainbow [which was Noah's sign that there would be no future floods]; the manna; the staff; the shamir worm; the script; the inscription; and the Tablets. Some say also destructive spirits, Moses' grave, and the ram of our forefather Abraham. And some say also tongs, which are made with tongs.

[ח] עֲשָׂרָה דְּבָרִים נִבְרְאוּ בְּעֶרֶב שַׁבָּת בֵּין הַשְּׁמָשׁוֹת, וְאֵלוֹ הֵן: פִּי הָאָרֶץ, וּפִי הַבְּאֵר, פִּי הָאֶתֶן, וְהַקֶּשֶׁת, וְהַמָּן, וְהַמָּטָה, וְהַשְּׁמִיר, הַכֶּתֶב, וְהַמִּכְתָּב, וְהַלּוּחֹת. וַיֵּשׁ אֲמָרִים: אֵף הַמְזִיקִין, וְקִבּוּרְתּוֹ שֶׁל מֹשֶׁה, וְאֵילוֹ שֶׁל אֲבִרָהָם אֲבִינוּ. וַיֵּשׁ אֲמָרִים: אֵף צֶבֶת בְּצֶבֶת עֲשׂוּיָהּ.

10 things were created just before the first Shabbos at twilight.

Rambam - not the things themselves but the potential for them to occur in the future at the proper time according to Divine Will.

Sofer Ha Mussar – everything created was designed as a prototype which would be replicated constantly. That is what is meant by Gen 2:3 “which God created to make”. Except for these 10 items which would not be reproduced. They have this different property from the rest of creation.

Maharal - There is order in supernatural occurrences. Miracles are woven into the fabric of nature planned and waiting for the proper circumstances under which they are to occur.

Tiferes Yisroel - our observance of Shabbos testifies to the fact that God who rested on the 7th day created all of nature and even these supernatural items just before Shabbos were also created by Him.

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(ח) עשרה דברים נבראו בערב שבת בין השמשות, ואלו הן: פי הארץ, ופי הבאר, פי האתון, והקשת, והמן, והמטה, והשמיר, הכתב, והמכתב, והלוחות. ויש אומרים: אף המזיקין, וקבורתו של משה, ואילו של אברהם אבינו. ויש אומרים: אף צבת בצבת עשויה.

Some say destructive spirits

Destructive spirits. God created Adam and Eve on the 6th day. He also created many other spirits but the Sabbath came before He gave them bodies leaving them as spirits without physical form. These spirits are the many forms of the evil inclination.

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Moshe's grave.

Moshe challenged God that if He did not do away with Korach and his followers by means of an unprecedented miracle it would call into question whether God had really sent Moses (see Num 16:28-32) and Moses' entire prophecy would be in doubt. In order to establish the validity of the Torah, Moshe felt compelled to call for a demonstration of Divine intervention. But did Moshe not know about this Mishnah that tells us the mouth of the earth was created just before Shabbos on the 6th day of creation? Correct, he did not know because that same Mishnah speaks of Moshe's grave and God hid that Mishnah from him that alludes to his death.

Avos 5:8:30-33

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The Ram of our forefather Abraham, Gen 22:13.

Substituted for Isaac. It's sinews became the strings on David's lyre. Its skin, the cloak of Elijah. One of it's horns was blown at Sinai and the other will herald the in gathering of the exiles from the Assyrian and Babylonian Exiles.

Avos 5:8:10-11, 12-13, 14-15

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- 10-11 1. The mouth of the earth. Was not like an earthquake which can happen but the earth opened and closed up without a trace.
- 12-13 2. The mouth of the well that followed them in the desert in the merit of Miriam.
- 14-15 3. The mouth of Balaam's donkey. To show Balaam that all functions in nature were under God's control.
4. The Rainbow. The sign of God's covenant with Noah.
5. The Manna. Miraculously provided, and was so completely absorbed into the body that it produced no waste.
6. The staff. With which Moshe performed the miracles in Egypt.
7. The Shamir worm. Split large stones for the Temple.
8. The script. The Torah written in black fire on a surface of white fire.
9. The inscription. On the tablets were written on both sides and the center of the 'samach' and 'end mem' remained suspended in midair.
10. The Tablets. The first set created by God on the first Friday night. The second set were carved by Moses.

[9] Seven traits characterize an uncultivated person and seven a learned one. A learned person does not begin speaking before one who is greater than he in wisdom or in years; he does not interrupt the words of his fellow; he does not answer impetuously; he questions with relevance to the subject and he replies accurately; he discusses first things first and last things last; about something he has not heard he says, 'I have not heard'; and he acknowledges the truth. And the reverse of these characterize an uncultivated person.

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Seven traits that differentiate an uncultivated person from a learned person.

A learned person - does not speak before one who is greater than he in years.

~~Older people~~ must be honored for their superior theoretical knowledge and experience (Kiddushin 33A) greater than he in wisdom.

Or “in Numbers” 5:9:14. A teacher with a greater number of students is considered more wise since one’s greatest understanding of Torah comes from students.

Avos 5:9:15-19

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A learned person does not interrupt the words of his colleague.

It may confuse his thoughts. He needs an opportunity to vent his feelings. He is wise to not respond or defend against criticism immediately. He plans his words. A learned person seeks truth and allows his intellectual adversary the opportunity to state his case clearly.

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He does not answer impetuously.

R Yonah. This is a sign of wisdom since it is more likely one will answer intelligently.

R Moshe Almosnino - Translates ‘Nivhal’ as ‘excited or agitated’. A learned man will answer in a calm manner so students will be able to follow his argument and not be reluctant to ask questions in the future.

Avos 5:9:23-26

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He asks relevant questions (timely questions).

Rav - to clarify the point being discussed more completely.

Meiri - for example, he inquires about the laws of Pesach before the onset of Pesach.

Tiferes Yisroel - relevant means pertinent, to the point. Not to display his intellectual powers but to learn the truth.

Mivchar Hapaninim – “a learned man’s question is half the answer”. He poses his question carefully to aid a direct clear response.

Rambam – R’ Yonah - a learned person does not mix domains of knowledge. He does not ask for logical proofs in areas of faith nor does he offer theoretical answers to practical questions.

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He discusses first things first and last things last.

This shows he has a disciplined and orderly mind.

R' Yonah - he answers questions in the order in which they were asked or even better he answers the questions in logical order.

Rambam - recommends that a cultivated individual seeks wisdom by studying in a systematic fashion, attacking preliminary concepts first and only then moving onto the more complex areas.

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A learned person says about something he has not heard, “I have not heard”.

In other words he is willing to say, “I do not know”.

Meiri - he does not give an answer as though he heard the answer from an authority. That causes the Shechinah to leave the Jewish people (Berachos 27b Rashi).

Rambam - one should not talk about something he knows nothing about and he should not be ashamed to admit his ignorance in this area.

Midrash Shmuel - one who is truly wise is never ashamed to ask for further clarification.

Mishberei Yam - interprets this as a directive to express appreciation when one is taught something new. “Thank you for the new idea, I never heard that before”.

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 האמת. וחלופיהן בגלם.

Is thankful for the truth.

Rabbeinu Yona - a learned person's guiding principle is truth even if it goes against his ego.

Rashi - he is not embarrassed to admit a mistake.

Atzei Ya'ar - is eager for constructive criticism since he can then begin to correct his shortcomings. He is thankful for the truth.

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The reverse is true for the uncultivated person.

The Mishnah highlights the traits of the cultivated person but does not specifically list those of the uncultivated. The Torah goes out of its way to accentuate the positive and avoid the negative. “The animal is not pure rather than the animal is unclean” Gen 7:8

Praise the learned rather than criticize the uncultivated.

Art Scroll p322

[10] Seven kinds of punishment come to the world for seven kinds of transgressions. (a) If some people tithe and others do not, a famine caused by lack of rain ensues, some go hungry and others are satisfied; (b) if all decided not to tithe, general famine caused by both armed bands and drought ensues; and (c) [if they also decided] not to separate the challah, a famine caused by destructive drought ensues;

[ו] שבעה מיני פרעניות באין לעולם על שבעה גופי עברה: מקצתן מעשרין ומקצתן אינן מעשרין, רעב של בצרת בא, מקצתן רעבים ומקצתן שבעים; גמרו שלא לעשר, רעב של מהומה ושל בצרת בא; ושלא לטל את החלה, רעב של בליה בא;

Seven types of punishment came to the world for seven kinds of severe (gufei) transgressions.

Meiri - The punishment reflects the crime ‘midah keneged midah’. Analyze the punishment and you will understand the failing which needed to be corrected. Catastrophes that appear to be natural are really punishment meant to arouse people to self scrutiny and repentance. (In light of the Holocaust can this any longer be said?)

Midrash Schmuel ‘gufei aveirah’ means “primary or severe transgressions” and causes the ‘guf’ “bodies”, of evil angels to come into being to pursue him for his sin or for ignoring God’s will.

R Shlomo Kluger ‘guf averah’ means “the primary sin” which leads to a cascade of other consequences. Eating untithed food is the primary sin, but it deprives the Levite of his sustenance. The children go hungry. Sins are committed in trying to compensate for the shortfall in food etc.

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If some people tithe and others do not...

When some people are lax about giving Maaser, 1/10th of the crop which is given to the Levite or Terumah 1/40, 1/50, 1/6th of the yield which is given to the Kohen the punishment is inflation.

Ran, Rashi - Those who can afford to buy food will be satisfied and those who cannot will go hungry.

Rambam, R' Yonah - translate 'Ra'av shel batzores' not as "lack of rain" but as "uneven rainfall". Rain will fall only in some places. The heavens will withhold rain and dew. The economy is plagued with constant inflation. One's paycheck disappears quickly and people chase after a living. Shabbos 32b.

Sefas Emes - a people become tightfisted and tithing becomes inconsistent. Midah Keneged Midah – God responds in kind by closing his hand and giving his blessings only selectively.

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If everyone decides not to tithe a general famine caused by armed hands and drought occurs.

Mussar Avos: If such behavior is copied by all in the community not just some but everybody suffers the consequences.

Avos D Rabbi Nosson - complete withholding of rain and dew.

Rambam and R' Yonah, Rav - The people will even be unable to cultivate, plant or harvest because of war or bands of ruffians.

Rashi - There need not be an actual famine. Merely a feeling by the people that they are not satisfied. This is one of the curses in the Tochachah Lev 26:26.

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If they also decide not to separate Challah a famine by fatal drought will occur.

Numbers 15P:17-21 - The Kohen must be given a portion called Challah, from every batch of dough and from the produce of a field.

Rashi, R' Yonah - withholding Challah is a separate sin from not giving Terumah or Maaser.

Eduyos 1:2 - One is not obligated to give Challah unless the person kneads more than an Omer, 43.2 eggs volume. This corresponds to the amount of manna that fell daily for each Jew in the wilderness.

Genesis 3:17 - God kneaded a soul and mud together to create Adam much as you might knead bread. This is recognized when we take Challah that we owe our ability to produce life and to earn a livelihood to Him. If we fail to do so famine and fatal drought occur which is the curse placed on Adam after he ate from the tree of knowledge "Accursed is the ground because of you", Genesis 3:17.

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[ויא] דְּכַר בָּא לְעוֹלָם — עַל מִיתוֹת הָאֲמוּרוֹת בַּתּוֹרָה שֶׁלֹּא נִמְסְרוּ לְבֵית דִּין, וְעַל פְּרוֹת שְׁבִיעִית; חֶרֶב בָּאָה לְעוֹלָם — עַל עֲנוּי הַדִּין, וְעַל עֲוֹת הַדִּין, וְעַל הַמּוֹרִים בַּתּוֹרָה שֶׁלֹּא כִּהְלָכָה; חִיָּה רָעָה בָּאָה לְעוֹלָם — עַל שְׁבוּעַת שָׁוָא, וְעַל חִלּוּל הַשֵּׁם; גְּלוּת בָּאָה לְעוֹלָם — עַל עֹבְדֵי עֲבוּדָה זָרָה, וְעַל גְּלוּי עֲרִיּוֹת, וְעַל שְׁפִיכוֹת דָּמִים, וְעַל שְׁמִטַּת הָאָרֶץ.

Plague comes to the world for death penalties ordered by the Torah that were not carried out by the court
— Bais Din

Tiferes Yisroel-Plague pestilence kills many people suddenly.

Why were these sentences not carried out by the Bais Din?

The court was corrupt. Influenced by bribes or used mistaken judgement.

The Sanhedrin had been disbanded by political circumstances.

The criminal escaped before execution.

The punishment – of ‘Misah bidei Shamayin’ – is not carried out in the courts.

Karas - Excision of the soul. Is not in the court's perview.

There are a lack of witnesses or a lack of proper warning.

Nonetheless, if punishment is deserved God will provide it.

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And for the illegal use of the fruits of the Sabbatical (7th) year called Schemittah.

Bechoros - On the seventh year of the 7 year cycle one must renounce ownership of whatever grows during that year. Others are permitted to enter your field and take produce for themselves. They must use it as food not for commercial purposes.

Tiferes Yisroel - If no one harvests there are no tithes available for the Levites or the poor other than the fields. The owner of the field who does not make the produce available is responsible for the suffering and hunger of these people and they may even die. Therefore, the angel of death is permitted to take the owner of the field. Mida Keneged Midah.

Maharam Shick - We observe Schemittah as an act of faith that God will provide (Taanis 8b). If we don't leave food for the poor from our fields God will take us from this world and leave the harvest for others.

Avodah Zarah 54b - The produce of Schemittah has special sanctity.

Exodus 23:11 before it is picked it must be made accessible to all.

Pesachim 52b - it must not be wasted.

Avodah Zarah 62a - It must not be used for commercial purposes.

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[וא] 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 בהלכה; חיה רעה באה לעולם — על שבועת שוא, ועל חלול השם; גלות באה לעולם — על עובדי עבודה זרה, ועל גלוי עריות, ועל שפיכות דמים, ועל שמטת הארץ.

The sword of war comes to the world for the delay of justice.

Rashi, R' Yonah, Rambam - delay in the execution of one convicted of a capital crime causes mental agony. He must be executed that same day.

Machzor Vitry - Any delay triggers this punishment.

The courts delay in hearing the case.

The judge turns to other cases.

Gur Aryeh - The judge refuses to hear the case because he fears one of the litigants. He may not do so.

Deut 1:17 You shall not tremble before any man.

R' Yaakov Kamenetsky - The bending of Torah law because of fear of any human being is a desecration of God's name. It shows more fear of man than your proper fear of God.

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For the perversion of justice.

Rashi - accepting bribes

Rambam, Meiri - One who vindicates the guilty and indicts the innocent.

Bava Kamma 119a - One who robs his fellow is considered to have taken his soul.

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For rendering decisions contrary to the halachah

Rashi, Rav, R' Yonah - one who permits what is forbidden or forbids what is permitted.

Midrash Shmuel - One who renders decisions in the presence of his teacher.

- One who rules in matters of law in spite of his incompetence in those matters.

Meiri - A perversion of justice brings conflict in the world, it brings a sword, since the one victimized may seek revenge.

Yalkut Yehudah - Where justice prevails brute force can gain no foothold.

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Wild beasts come upon the world for vain oaths.

Ex 20:7 - The third of the 10 commandments is against vain oaths.

Shevuos 29a - One must not use God's name in a vain oath.

Is it a vain oath to swear that this:

marble table is marble. Yes, it is obvious and needs no oath.

wooden table is gold. Yes, it is so clearly not so that it needs no oath.

R' Yonah - Man can utter oaths because he can speak and this raises him above the animal world. But if he abuses his power of speech by uttering vain oaths he has sunk to the level of animals and becomes vulnerable to them.

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And for desecration of God's name.

Rav - for sinning publicly in brazen defiance of God and the Torah.

R' Yonah, Meiri - Man is given dominion over the animals but only if he lives on a more elevated plane than they; if not he can become their victim.

Abarbanel - one who desecrates God's name indicates that he does not recognize God's supremacy over man so God teaches him in kind that the animals do not recognize man's supremacy over them.

[11] (d) pestilence comes to the world for the death penalties prescribed by the Torah that were not carried out by the court, and for illegally using the fruits of the Sabbatical year; (e) the sword of war comes to the world for the delay of justice, for the perversion of justice and for interpreting the Torah decision in opposition to the halachah; (f) wild beasts come upon the world for vain oaths and for Desecration of God's Name; (g) exile comes to the world for idolatry, for immorality, for bloodshed, and for working the earth during the Sabbatical year.

(וַיֹּא) דָּבָר בָּא לְעוֹלָם – עַל מִיתוֹת הָאֲמוּרוֹת בְּתוֹרָה שֶׁלֹּא נִמְסְרוּ לְבֵית דִּין, וְעַל פְּרוֹת שְׁבִיעִית; חֶרֶב בָּאָה לְעוֹלָם – עַל עֲנוּי הַדִּין, וְעַל עֲוֹת הַדִּין, וְעַל הַמּוֹרִים בְּתוֹרָה שֶׁלֹּא בִּהְלָכָה; חִיָּה רָעָה בָּאָה לְעוֹלָם – עַל שְׁבוּעַת שָׁוָא, וְעַל חִלּוּל הַשֵּׁם; גְּלוּת בָּאָה לְעוֹלָם – עַל עֹבְדֵי עֲבוּדָה זָרָה, וְעַל גְּלוּי עֲרִיּוֹת, וְעַל שְׁפִיכוֹת דָּמִים, וְעַל שִׁמְשֻׁת הָאָרֶץ.

Exile comes to the world for idolatry, immorality and for bloodshed.

R' Yonah quotes Shabbos 33a where we are told the Torah sources that teach us that exile is the result of these cardinal sins.

Idolatry - Lev 26:31,33 - intellectual sin – contaminates a person's mind.

Immorality - Lev 18:25,28 – crime of passion – rooted in desires of the flesh.

Murder - Num 35:33,34 - transforms man's physical power into a force for destruction.

Rambam, Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah 5:1-3, Lev 18:5 - “by which he shall live”. The Torah rules were given for the sake of life, not death.

Except for these three for which we are to accept death rather than to commit them.

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Exile also comes for working the earth during a Schmittah year.

Lev 25:4-5 and Lev 26:34 - One may not plow or sow during the Shemittah year.

Lev 26:34 - The land will be appeased of its Sabbaticals while you are in the land of your foes.

Shabbos 33a - We learn from Lev 26:34, that if the people do not let the land rest in their presence, it will rest in their absence.

Rashi - because of the 70 Sabbaticals that Israel had violated during the period of the first Temple the Babylonian exile lasted for 70 years.

The Holy Land cannot tolerate the sins that other lands may tolerate because it is so holy. Citizens were not spewed out of Egypt or other lands because of their immorality, only from Israel, because it is a land of higher sanctity.

Rambam - Jacob married two sisters in Charon but could not be married to both in the Holy Land. As soon as the family arrived Rachel died. Jacob did not live with sisters once he arrived in Eretz Yisroel

[12] *At four periods [of the seven-year Sabbatical cycle] pestilence increases – in the fourth year, in the seventh year, in the year following the Sabbatical year, and annually following the Succos festival. In the fourth year, for [neglecting] the tithe of the poor in the third; in the seventh year, for [neglecting] the tithe of the poor in the sixth; in the year following the Sabbatical year, for [violating the laws of] the Sabbatical produce; annually, at the conclusion of the festival of Succos, for robbing the poor of their gifts.*

[יב] בארבעה פרקים הדבר מתרבה: ברביעית, ובשביעית, ובמוצאי שביעית, ובמוצאי החג שבכל שנה ושנה. ברביעית, מפני מעשר עני שבשלישית; בשביעית, מפני מעשר עני שבששית; במוצאי שביעית, מפני פרות שביעית; במוצאי החג שבכל שנה ושנה, מפני גזל מתנות עניים.

In the 4th, 7th, 8th (The year after the Sabbatical year) and annually following the Succos festival.

The poor look forward to receiving support during these periods and are especially disappointed if their hopes are dashed.

Megillah 4b - The poor anxiously await the Megillah reading in anticipation of receiving gifts.

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At four periods (of the 7 year Sabbatical cycle) pestilence increases.

Magen Avos - Having finished listing sets of seven the Mishnah begins listing sets of four.

Tosofos Tom Tov - pestilence comes for a variety of reasons one is the sin of denying the poor access to the yield of Schmittah but in a time of general affliction the poor suffer proportionately more and if they are ignored the pestilence will intensify.

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For robbing the poor of their gifts.

Two cases before a judge.

One family complained that their miserly father did not provide adequately for them or give any money to charity. He claimed he needed to save his money for his old age.

The other family complained that their father gave too much away to the poor leaving the family with inadequate support. The father claimed he feared he might die young and not have enough time to gain the Mitzvos of giving enough charity.

The judge decided that God should save each one from that which he feared most.

The miser's life should be shortened so he won't need much for his old age.

The open-handed philanthropist should live to a ripe old age.

A person who neglects giving charity may have more money but he won't have the peace of mind to enjoy it.

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Giving Tzedakah is a Mitzvah and we hope to be rewarded for doing Mitzvot. But do we know which recipient of our charity will gain us the best reward? Which individual or organization should be support?

Once upon a time a rich man gave a famous Rabbi one gold coin each week and his fortune grew fabulously. A friend told him about an even greater Tzaddik and suggested he might do even better if he supported the holier man. The wealthy man listened to this advice and switched his giving to the new Tzaddik. He was appalled to notice his fortune drastically fall and he came to apologize to his original Rabbi. “I don’t know what happened that there was such a change in my financial success”. The Rabbi explained. “While you were generous to me without inquiring if I was the most worthy recipient. Heaven did not check to see if you were the one most deserving of wealth. Now that you are careful to only give charity to a great Tzaddik, Heaven is also careful about whom they bless with prosperity”.

Avos 5:12:34-37

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 שְׁבִיעִית, וּבְמוֹצָאי הַחֹג שֶׁכָּבֵל שָׁנָה וְשָׁנָה. בַּרְבִּיעִית, מִפְּנֵי מַעֲשֵׂר
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 מַתָּנוֹת עֲנִיִּים.

For robbing the poor of their gifts.

How can one who does not give a gift be accused of theft?

Midrash Shmuel - One who refrains from contributing is as if he had stolen God's property. God gave it to him only so that he would pass it on to the poor. Not doing so is like stealing from the poor.

Art Scroll p333

[13] *There are four character types among people: (a) One who says, 'My property is mine and yours is yours,' is an average character type, but some say this is characteristic of Sodom; (b) 'Mine is yours and yours is mine,' is an unlearned person; (c) 'Mine is yours and yours is yours,' is scrupulously pious; (d) 'Yours is mine and mine is mine,' is wicked.*

(וג) ארבע מדות באדם. האומר: „שלי שלי ושלק שלך.” זו מדה בינונית. ויש אומרים: זו מדת סדום; „שלי שלך ושלק שלי.” עם הארץ: „שלי שלך ושלק שלך.” חסיד: „שלק שלי ושלי שלי.” רשע.

One who says “What is mine is mine and what is yours is yours” is an average individual:
Some say this is the characteristic of Sodom.

R' S.R. Hirsch - That each should keep what is his is midway between good and evil however, it is reprehensible, for it removes the principle of kindness between individuals.

R' Moshe Avigdar Amiel - ascribes the first portion 'HaOmer' “one says”, to an individual's behavior, However, 'Yesh Omrim' (plural) “There are those who say”, suggests that if a community has this attitude it is a characteristic of Sodom.

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Rashi, Rav - I don't want others to derive any benefit from me nor do I want to derive any benefit from them.

Meiri - 'Bainonis' means “consistent”, he is an acceptable type of person though perhaps a little antisocial but not worthy of censure.

R Yonah - he is neither a giver nor a taker.

Eruvin 49a, Bava Basra 12b - refusing to allow others to benefit from your property, even when no loss will be incurred is unethical, leads to stinginess and even cruelty and greed.

R Yonah - such a person is considered average because he will give charity when he has to, out of a sense of religious obligation, but his attitude is that, ‘whatever I am allowed to keep, I will keep’.

Lachmei Todah - a streak of self centeredness is a common human trait, that is why when said in the singular ‘ha Omer’ it is acceptable, but when society acts that way it rises to the sin of Sodom and the poor are in danger of being neglected.

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One who says what is mine is mine and what is yours is yours some say this is the characteristic of Sodom.

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Mine is yours and yours is mine is an unlearned person.

He has no appreciation for the sanctity of private property.

R' Yonah - is non-derogatory – he is just a person who wants to promote good will and harmony and would like people to share with each other.

Tiferes Yisroel - he wants to benefit his neighbors and wants to benefit from them.

Meiri - he is a social creature.

R'Simcha Bunim of P'shis'cha - believes that his spiritual growth is in God's hands and his material blessings are in his own hands. Just the opposite of our teaching, “That fear of Heaven is in our own hands and everything else is in the hands of Heaven”.

Art Scroll p336

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Mine is yours and yours is yours – is scrupulously pious.

He does more than what is required by the letter of the law.

Kesubos 67b - even for charity a person should not spend more than 1/5th of his assets.

Maharal - giving away so much that he becomes a ward of the community is not allowed.

Kozhnitzer Maggid - Such a person addresses God, “I know that my possessions are really yours and that what is yours is yours and I will respect your creatures and your creation and do your Mitzvos for your sake, not for my self aggrandizement, reward or prestige”.

Art Scroll p337

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He is self centered. He wants to benefit from others even if it hurts them.

Rashi, Rav - such a person will not do something for someone else even if it costs him nothing.

Magen Avos - such a person is so obsessed with ownership that he may eventually resort to thievery.

Art Scroll p337

Avos 5:14:
Weiss #468

[14] There are four types of temperament: (a) One who is angered easily and pacified easily, his gain is offset by his loss; (b) one who is hard to anger and hard to pacify, his loss is offset by his gain; (c) one who is hard to anger and easy to pacify is pious; (d) one who is easily angered and hard to pacify is wicked.

[יד] ארבע מדות בדעות: נוח לבעוס ונוח לרצות, יצא שכרו בהפסדו; קשה לבעוס וקשה לרצות, יצא הפסדו בשכרו; קשה לבעוס ונוח לרצות, חסיד; נוח לבעוס וקשה לרצות, רשע.

He whom it is hard to anger and is easy to pacify he is a Chasid (pious).

Yalkut Shimoni – whoever hears himself cursed and it lies in his power to retaliate and he does not but remains silent – he is called a Chasid.

Rambam Hil Teshuvah 2:10 – one must not show himself cruel by not accepting an apology. He should be easily pacified and angered (provoked) with difficulty.

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There are four types of temperament.

Avos has discussed various attitudes that people have toward money and personal property it now discusses four basic temperaments in regards to how a person handles anger.

A person's character can be determined through his wallet (his attitude toward money), his cup (his behavior when he is intoxicated), and his anger. How easy to anger, how frequently he is angry what causes his anger, and how he behaves when angry.

Can a person change the temperament with which he was born? If not, it is unfair to make relative values about the four temperaments. It is clear that change in temperament is inextricably bound up in the principle of free will. It is possible for a person to restructure and modify even his most basic characteristics (Sefer HaMussar).

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One who is angered easily and pacified easily, his gain is offset by his loss.

R' Yonah - one who becomes angry over trivial matters is bound to be provoked often. Any positive aspect of his character is offset by his general vulnerability to even minor frustration. Anger damages the soul. A wrathful state causes spiritual damage and injury. A person's family and friends who know his volatile temperament will avoid him or avoid discussions with him or debates and exchange of views for fear of so easily inciting his anger. Thus he is alone, has little conversation and misses out on interpersonal relationships.

[14] There are four types of temperament: (a) One who is angered easily and pacified easily, his gain is offset by his loss; (b) one who is hard to anger and hard to pacify, his loss is offset by his gain; (c) one who is hard to anger and easy to pacify is pious; (d) one who is easily angered and hard to pacify is wicked.

[יד] ארבע מדות בדעות: נוח לבעוס ונוח לרצות, יצא שכרו בהפסדו; קשה לבעוס וקשה לרצות, יצא הפסדו בשכרו; קשה לבעוס וקשה לרצות, חסיד; נוח לבעוס וקשה לרצות, רשע.

One who is hard to anger and hard to pacify his loss is offset by his gain.

R' Yonah, Rashi, Rav - his occasional outburst is more than offset by his general calm demeanor. He is rarely angry and realizes it to be an unfavorable mood which he should try to avoid. A person who is easy to anger becomes angry so often he believes it to be the natural state of things and makes little efforts to cure himself of that tendency.

One who loses his temper loses his wisdom.

Anger creates separation and even after the anger passes the bad feeling and the distance created usually linger.

[14] *There are four types of temperament: (a) One who is angered easily and pacified easily, his gain is offset by his loss; (b) one who is hard to anger and hard to pacify, his loss is offset by his gain; (c) one who is hard to anger and easy to pacify is pious; (d) one who is easily angered and hard to pacify is wicked.*

[יד] אַרְבַּע מִדּוֹת בְּדַעוֹת: נוֹחַ לַכַּעֲס וְנוֹחַ לַרְצוֹת, יֵצֵא שְׂכָרוֹ בְּהַפְסְדּוֹ; קָשָׁה לַכַּעֲס וְקָשָׁה לַרְצוֹת, יֵצֵא הַפְסְדּוֹ בְּשִׂכְרוֹ; קָשָׁה לַכַּעֲס וְנוֹחַ לַרְצוֹת, חֲסִיד; נוֹחַ לַכַּעֲס וְקָשָׁה לַרְצוֹת, רָשָׁע.

He whom it is hard to anger and is easy to pacify he is a Chasid (pious).

Yalkut Shimoni - Whoever hears himself cursed and it lies in his power to retaliate and he does not but remains silent, he is called a Chasid.

Rambam Hil Teshuvah 2:10 - One must not show himself cruel by not accepting an apology. He should be easily pacified and his anger provoked only with difficulty.

R' Yonah - There are times when anger us appropriate.

Pinchas displayed anger on God's behalf against outrageous immorality.

Sfas Emes - piety is manifest in his ability to be appeased inspite of the good reasons for his anger.

[14] *There are four types of temperament: (a) One who is angered easily and pacified easily, his gain is offset by his loss; (b) one who is hard to anger and hard to pacify, his loss is offset by his gain; (c) one who is hard to anger and easy to pacify is pious; (d) one who is easily angered and hard to pacify is wicked.*

(יוד) ארבע מדות בדעות: נוח לבעוס ונוח לרצות, יצא שכרו בהפסדו; קשה לבעוס וקשה לרצות, יצא הפסדו בשכרו; קשה לבעוס ונוח לרצות, חסיד; נוח לבעוס וקשה לרצות, רשע.

One who is angered easily and hard to pacify is wicked.

Rashi - his anger will lead to sin Berachos 29b.

Rambam, Maharal - a person with a quick and enduring temper is already considered evil.

Nedarim 22b - Proverbs 29:22 - an angry person incites strife and one possessed by rage brings much sin.

Maharal - sin is a loss of spiritual equilibrium.

- Anger is a loss of emotional equilibrium, a loss of which leads to sin,.

[15] *There are four types of students: (a) One who grasps quickly and forgets quickly, his gain is offset by his loss; (b) one who grasps slowly and forgets slowly, his loss is offset by his gain; (c) one who grasps quickly and forgets slowly, this is a good portion; (d) one who grasps slowly and forgets quickly, this is a bad portion.*

[טו] ארבע מדות בתלמידים: מהיר לשמוע ומהיר לאבד, יצא שקרו בהפסדו; קשה לשמוע וקשה לאבד, יצא הפסדו בשקרו; מהיר לשמוע וקשה לאבד, זה חלק טוב; קשה לשמוע ומהיר לאבד, זה חלק רע.

There are four types of students.

One who grasps quickly and forgets quickly, his gain is offset by his loss.

Rashi, Rav - He will never acquire a large fund of knowledge (unless he writes down what he learns for later review).

Tiferes Yisroel - Such a person can overcome his weakness through constant review.

R Yonah - The mere effort to learn is laudatory and is rewarded.

Maharal, Midrash Shmuel - “one who grasps quickly” is the cause of his “forgetting quickly”. He did not listen carefully he did not digest the facts, his grasp of the facts was shallow, they made no lasting impression on him, he did not encode the information. Not so much he forgot – he never really learned it in the beginning.

[15] *There are four types of students: (a) One who grasps quickly and forgets quickly, his gain is offset by his loss; (b) one who grasps slowly and forgets slowly, his loss is offset by his gain; (c) one who grasps quickly and forgets slowly, this is a good portion; (d) one who grasps slowly and forgets quickly, this is a bad portion.*

[טו] אַרְבַּע מִדּוֹת בְּתַלְמִידִים: מְהִיר לְשִׁמוּעַ וּמְהִיר לְאַבֵּד, יָצָא שֶׁכֶּרֶן בְּהִפָּסְדוֹ; קָשָׁה לְשִׁמוּעַ וְקָשָׁה לְאַבֵּד, יָצָא הִפָּסְדוֹ בְּשִׁכְרוֹ; מְהִיר לְשִׁמוּעַ וְקָשָׁה לְאַבֵּד, זֶה חֵלֶק טוֹב; קָשָׁה לְשִׁמוּעַ וּמְהִיר לְאַבֵּד, זֶה חֵלֶק רָע.

One who grasps slowly and forgets slowly his loss is offset by his gain.

Rashi, Rav - He has the ability to retain his knowledge. He will acquire permanent knowledge.

R. Yonah, Rav - if funds are limited, support the student with a strong memory. He has a better chance to succeed than one with quick grasp but poor memory.

Maharal - Such a student's strong retention may well be the result of his slow understanding. By absorbing his lessons slowly and systematically he achieves a clarity that enables him to remember it. He encodes strongly.

[15] There are four types of students: (a) One who grasps quickly and forgets quickly, his gain is offset by his loss; (b) one who grasps slowly and forgets slowly, his loss is offset by his gain; (c) one who grasps quickly and forgets slowly, this is a good portion; (d) one who grasps slowly and forgets quickly, this is a bad portion.

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One who grasps quickly and forgets slowly. He has a good portion,

One who is blessed with the ability to understand concepts quickly and to retain what he learns is however cautioned to review consistently rather than rely on his strong memory.

R' Yonah - to learn and then allow forgetfulness to cause natural erosion of the material is equivalent to sowing and not reaping.

R' Yonah - Moral strength is required with hard work, intelligence is Divinely endowed.

[15] There are four types of students: (a) One who grasps quickly and forgets quickly, his gain is offset by his loss; (b) one who grasps slowly and forgets slowly, his loss is offset by his gain; (c) one who grasps quickly and forgets slowly, this is a good portion; (d) one who grasps slowly and forgets quickly, this is a bad portion.

[טו] ארבע מדות בתלמידים: מהיר לשמוע ומהיר לאבד, יצא שקרו בהפסדו; קשה לשמוע וקשה לאבד, יצא הפסדו בשקרו; מהיר לשמוע וקשה לאבד, זה חלק טוב; קשה לשמוע ומהיר לאבד, זה חלק רע.

One who grasps slowly and forgets quickly this is a bad portion.

R' Yonah - one who is not endowed with natural ability has to expend strenuous efforts to succeed. However, a person will be rewarded commensurate with his effort.

Psalms - Torah is the testimony of Hashem making the simple person wise. Study of Torah can expand one's abilities.

Bigdei Sheish - Effort, hard work and prayer are always rewarded.

Avos 5:16:
Weiss #86

[16] *There are four types of donors to charity: (a) One who wishes to give himself but wants others not to give, he begrudges others; (b) that others should give but that he should not give, he begrudges himself; (c) that he should give and that others should give is pious; (d) that he should not give and that others should not give is wicked.*

טז] ארבע מדות בנותני צדקה: הרוצה שיתן ולא יתנו אחרים, עינו רעה בשל אחרים; יתנו אחרים והוא לא יתן, עינו רעה בשל; יתן ויתנו אחרים, חסיד; לא יתן ולא יתנו אחרים, רשע.

There are four attitudes among those who give charity
one who gives and wishes other to also give
one who does not give but wishes others to give
one who does not give and does not wish others to give
one who gives but does not care if others give or not.

Every person is charitable if he doesn't give it is because he has a barrier.

Baal Shem Tov – light is needed for the darkness

The uncharitable person is the chair upon which the charitable sit.

[16] *There are four types of donors to charity: (a) One who wishes to give himself but wants others not to give, he begrudges others; (b) that others should give but that he should not give, he begrudges himself; (c) that he should give and that others should give is pious; (d) that he should not give and that others should not give is wicked.*

[טז] ארבע מדות בנוחני צדקה: הרוצה שיתן ולא יתנו אחרים, עינו רעה בשל אחרים; יתנו אחרים והוא לא יתן, עינו רעה בשל; יתן ויתנו אחרים, חסיד; לא יתן ולא יתנו אחרים, רשע.

One who wishes to give but wants others not to give his eye is evil in regards to others.

Rashi - He wants to prevent others from sharing in the blessings of increased wealth and good reputation that are the results of charitable acts.

Meiri - He may wish to inflate his own image.

Tiferes Yisroel - He denies the poor any “Extra” funds. It bothers him that the poor are not totally dependent and thus appreciative of his donation and begrudges then the extra support.

Chasam Sofer - “evil toward others” 10-13 by not encouraging others to give. The poor must also have enough to give charity to others and to share in the self-esteem that giving provides.

[16] *There are four types of donors to charity: (a) One who wishes to give himself but wants others not to give, he begrudges others; (b) that others should give but that he should not give, he begrudges himself; (c) that he should give and that others should give is pious; (d) that he should not give and that others should not give is wicked.*

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That others should give but that he should not give he begrudges himself.

R' Yonah - He begrudges himself the freedom of spending as he sees fit.

Meiri - A person who is afraid to contribute charity often is a person who fears for his financial security and has no faith in the future. He can't see the future. He can't see the future with confidence labeled here as 'aiyno raah', "Evil Eye".

Kesubos 66b - The best way to preserve your wealth is to give charity for the giving of charity increases one's wealth. One who fails to give charity only hurts himself "his evil eye affects only him", 'aiyno raah besheloh'.

Midrash Shmuel - He does not give but he does encourage others to give and therefore he is not considered wicked and he is listed in the category of donors.

Avos 5:16:22-25

[16] *There are four types of donors to charity: (a) One who wishes to give himself but wants others not to give, he begrudges others; (b) that others should give but that he should not give, he begrudges himself; (c) that he should give and that others should give is pious; (d) that he should not give and that others should not give is wicked.*

[טז] ארבע מדות בנותני צדקה: הרוצה שיתן ולא יתנו אחרים, עינו רעה בשל אחרים; יתנו אחרים והוא לא יתן, עינו רעה בשל יתן יתנו אחרים, חסיד; לא יתן ולא יתנו אחרים, רשע.

that he shall give and others should give is saintly.

R' Almosnino - He wants to have others benefit from the Mitzvah of giving charity also.

Alshich - one who gives so that others will follow his example and give also.

Rambam - A good way to give charity (Hilchos Matanos Aniyim 10:7-14) is via an intermediary, so the poor person does not know who supports him and is not embarrassed when they meet. Here, he is a person who gives to an intermediary so that other people should give his funds (to the poor person). The best way to give charity is to give the poor person a job or a loan so that he can be self sufficient.

Bava Basra 9a - One who enlists the aid of others in acts of charity is greater than one who gives only personally. It may be uncomfortable to ask others to give but to do so is laudatory because you help the poor and permit others a share in the Mitzvah.

Avos 5:16:26-31

[16] *There are four types of donors to charity: (a) One who wishes to give himself but wants others not to give, he begrudges others; (b) that others should give but that he should not give, he begrudges himself; (c) that he should give and that others should give is pious; (d) that he should not give and that others should not give is wicked.*

[טז] ארבע מדות בנוחני צדקה: הרוצה שיתן ולא יתנו אחרים, עינו רעה בשל אחרים; יתנו אחרים והוא לא יתן, עינו רעה בשלו; יתן ויתנו אחרים, חסיד; לא יתן ולא יתנו אחרים, רשע.

That he should not give and that others should not give is wicked.

Mikveh Yisroel - he is guilty of a double wickedness, he does not give and he does not inspire others to give.

Avos 5:17:1-5

[17] There are four types among those who go to the house of study: (a) One who goes but does not study, has the reward for going; (b) one who studies [at home] but does not attend [the house of study], has the reward for accomplishment; (c) one who goes and studies is pious; (d) one who does not go and does not study is wicked.

[ז] אַרְבַּע מִדּוֹת בְּהוֹלֵכֵי בֵּית הַמִּדְרָשׁ: הוֹלֵךְ וְאֵינוֹ עוֹשֶׂה, שְׂכָר הֶלִיכָה בֵּירוֹ; עוֹשֶׂה וְאֵינוֹ הוֹלֵךְ, שְׂכָר מַעֲשֶׂה בֵּירוֹ; הוֹלֵךְ וְעוֹשֶׂה, חֲסִיד; לֹא הוֹלֵךְ וְלֹא עוֹשֶׂה, רָשָׁע.

There are four types of people in regards to going to the study hall.

Rambam - It does not refer to four types of people who attend since two of the four never go.

Lechem Shamayim - It refers to people who at one point did go, some who continue and others who have stopped.

Avos 5:17:6-11

[17] *There are four types among those who go to the house of study: (a) One who goes but does not study, has the reward for going; (b) one who studies [at home] but does not attend [the house of study], has the reward for accomplishment; (c) one who goes and studies is pious; (d) one who does not go and does not study is wicked.*

[יז] ארבע מדות בהולכי בית המדרש: הולך ואינו עושה, שכר הליכה
בידו; עושה ואינו הולך, שכר מעשה בידו; הולך ועושה, חסיד; לא
הולך ולא עושה, רשע.

One who goes but does not study has the reward for going.

Rashi, Rav - They may not sit down and study but they listen and learn by listening.

R' Mendel of Kotzk - Why are people rewarded for going to the study hall if they do not study? Because merely being there frees him from mundane activity and give him at least the chance for spiritual improvement.

[17] *There are four types among those who go to the house of study: (a) One who goes but does not study, has the reward for going; (b) one who studies [at home] but does not attend [the house of study], has the reward for accomplishment; (c) one who goes and studies is pious; (d) one who does not go and does not study is wicked.*

[ח] אַרְבַּע מִדּוֹת בְּהוֹלְכֵי בֵּית הַמִּדְרָשׁ: הוֹלֵךְ וְאֵינוֹ עוֹשֶׂה, שְׂכָר הַלִּיכָה בִּידוֹ; עוֹשֶׂה וְאֵינוֹ הוֹלֵךְ, שְׂכָר מַעֲשֵׂה בִּידוֹ; הוֹלֵךְ וְעוֹשֶׂה, חֲסִיד; לֹא הוֹלֵךְ וְלֹא עוֹשֶׂה, רָשָׁע.

There are four types of people who go to the House of Study

.... One who neither goes nor acts is wicked

Baal Shem Tov – How can the one who does not go be counted amongst the four types of people who go to the House of Study? Light is known to exist only because there is darkness. We can identify those who act properly by comparison with those who do not.

R' Yitzchok Isaac Komarna - Evil fulfills a purpose in the world allowing us to recognize the good.

Avos 5:17:12-17

[17] *There are four types among those who go to the house of study: (a) One who goes but does not study, has the reward for going; (b) one who studies [at home] but does not attend [the house of study], has the reward for accomplishment; (c) one who goes and studies is pious; (d) one who does not go and does not study is wicked.*

[יז] ארבע מדות בהולכי בית המדרש: הולך ואינו עושה, שכר הליכה בידו; עושה ואינו הולך, שכר מעשה בידו; הולך ועושה, חסיד; לא הולך ולא עושה, רשע.

One who studies at home but does not attend the study hall has the reward of accomplishment.

Rashi, Rav - One who studies at home is rewarded for the study itself but he misses out on the special reward for the act of going to the house of study.

Maharal - Study is a purely intellectual act. By physically going to a place of study one involves not only his mind but his body as well in the pursuit of Torah study.

Avos 5:17:18-20

[17] *There are four types among those who go to the house of study: (a) One who goes but does not study, has the reward for going; (b) one who studies [at home] but does not attend [the house of study], has the reward for accomplishment; (c) one who goes and studies is pious; (d) one who does not go and does not study is wicked.*

[יז] ארבע מדות בהולכי בית המדרש: הולך ואינו עושה, שכר הליכה בידו; עושה ואינו הולך, שכר מעשה בידו; הולך ועושה, חסיד; לא הולך ולא עושה, רשע.

One who goes and studies he is pious – a chasid.

Meiri - He made the extra effort to seek out the best environment for study.

HaChassid Yaavetz - His presence encourages others to learn and any contribution personal, moral or financial that helps learning, is laudable.

R Shlomo - The Slonimer Rebbe - Explained this clause does not mention reward. The truly pious person has no interest in reward for his actions. The reward for a pious person is the privilege of being pious.

Avos 5:17:21-25

[17] There are four types among those who go to the house of study: (a) One who goes but does not study, has the reward for going; (b) one who studies [at home] but does not attend [the house of study], has the reward for accomplishment; (c) one who goes and studies is pious; (d) one who does not go and does not study is wicked.

[יז] ארבע מדות בהולכי בית המדרש: הולך ואינו עושה, שכר הליכה
בירו; עושה ואינו הולך, שכר מעשה בירו; הולך ועושה, חסיד; לא
הולך ולא עושה, רשע.

There are four types of people who go to the House of Study
.... One who neither goes nor acts is wicked.

Baal Shem Tov - How can the one who does not go be counted amongst the four types of people who go to the House of Study? Light is known to exist only because there is darkness. We can identify those who act properly by comparison with those who do not.

R' Yitzchok Isaac of Komarna - Evil fulfills a purpose in the world allowing us to recognize the good.

Avos 5:18:1-9

[18] *There are four types among students who sit before the sages: A sponge, a funnel, a strainer and a sieve: a sponge, which absorbs everything; a funnel, which lets in from one end and lets out from the other; a strainer, which lets the wine flow through and retains the sediment; and a sieve, which allows the flour dust to pass through and retains the fine flour.*

[יח] אַרְבַּע מִדּוֹת בְּיוֹשְׁבִים לִפְנֵי חֲכָמִים: סָפּוֹג, וּמִשְׁפָּךְ, מְשַׁמֶּרֶת, וְנֶפֶד. סָפּוֹג, שֶׁהוּא סוֹפֵג אֶת הַכֹּל; וּמִשְׁפָּךְ, שֶׁמְכַנִּיס בּוֹ וּמוֹצִיא בּוֹ; מְשַׁמֶּרֶת, שֶׁמוֹצִיָּא אֶת הַיַּיִן וְקוֹלֶטֶת אֶת הַשְּׂמֶרִים; וְנֶפֶד, שֶׁמוֹצִיָּא אֶת הַקֶּמַח וְקוֹלֶטֶת אֶת הַסֵּלֶת.

There are four types among those who sit before the sages.

Avos 5:15 speaks about understanding and retention. This Mishnah speaks about the power of logic and comparing one item to another.

Midash Shmuel - They are referred to not as students but as types suggesting that the key to success is to remain constantly in the presence of one's teachers.

Mili d'Avos - Learning occurs not merely from the written or spoken word of one's teacher but from his behavior and his facial expressions, Eruvin 13b. Rabbi learned from R Meir but only saw his back and he said, "How much more I would have learned had I merited viewing him from the front". Facial expressions convey meanings that do not come across from words alone.

a sponge - absorbs everything

a funnel - retains nothing

a strainer - retains the wrong things

a sieve - retains only the good

Avos 5:18:10-14

[18] *There are four types among students who sit before the sages: A sponge, a funnel, a strainer and a sieve: a sponge, which absorbs everything; a funnel, which lets in from one end and lets out from the other; a strainer, which lets the wine flow through and retains the sediment; and a sieve, which allows the flour dust to pass through and retains the fine flour.*

[יח] ארבע מדות ביושבים לפני חכמים: ספוג, ומשפך, משמרת, ונפה. ספוג, שהוא סופג את הכל; ומשפך, שמכניס בזו ומוציא בזו; משמרת, שמוציאה את היין וקולטת את השמרים; ונפה, שמוציאה את הקמח וקולטת את הסלת.

A sponge which absorbs everything

Rashi, R' Yonah, Rav - He remembers everything but does not distinguish whether it is true or false clean or dirty.

Midrash Shmuel - A sponge may need to be squeezed in order to release its knowledge and pressured into teaching others.

Avos 5:18:15-19

[18] *There are four types among students who sit before the sages: A sponge, a funnel, a strainer and a sieve: a sponge, which absorbs everything; a funnel, which lets in from one end and lets out from the other; a strainer, which lets the wine flow through and retains the sediment; and a sieve, which allows the flour dust to pass through and retains the fine flour.*

[יח] אַרְבַּע מִדּוֹת בְּיוֹשְׁבֵי לִפְנֵי חֲכָמִים: סָפּוֹג, וּמִשְׁפָּךְ, מְשַׁמֶּרֶת, וְנִפְהָ.
סָפּוֹג, שֶׁהוּא סוֹפֵג אֶת הַכֹּל; וּמִשְׁפָּךְ, שֶׁמְכַנִּיס בּוֹ וּמוֹצִיא בּוֹ;
מְשַׁמֶּרֶת, שֶׁמוֹצִיָּאָה אֶת הַיַּיִן וְקוֹלֶטֶת אֶת הַשְּׂמֵרִים; וְנִפְהָ, שֶׁמוֹצִיָּאָה
אֶת הַקֶּמַח וְקוֹלֶטֶת אֶת הַסֵּלֶת.

A funnel which lets in from one and lets out from the other.

This student almost immediately forgets everything he learns.

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Avos 5:18:20-26

[18] *There are four types among students who sit before the sages: A sponge, a funnel, a strainer and a sieve: a sponge, which absorbs everything; a funnel, which lets in from one end and lets out from the other; a strainer, which lets the wine flow through and retains the sediment; and a sieve, which allows the flour dust to pass through and retains the fine flour.*

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A strainer, which lets the wine flow through and retains the sediment.

Rambam - He retains the minor trivial points.

R' Yonah, Rav - He lets the important truths, the wine, so to speak, slip out of his memory.

Ruach Chaim - Disagrees. The student who is a strainer keeps the good ideas that pass through his strainer and by repeating them shares them with others and retains them.

Avos 5:18:27-33

[18] *There are four types among students who sit before the sages: A sponge, a funnel, a strainer and a sieve: a sponge, which absorbs everything; a funnel, which lets in from one end and lets out from the other; a strainer, which lets the wine flow through and retains the sediment; and a sieve, which allows the flour dust to pass through and retains the fine flour.*

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

And a sieve, which allows the flour dust to pass through and retains the fine flour.

Rashi, R' Yonah, Rambam - He is the best student. He retains the essential and truthful points of a matter and rejects all that is false.

That sediment that is captured in the strainer or the sieve is it best to retain it or discard it?

If it is material involved in a halachic decision it is best to know it so the arguments for and against are known to you and you can defend your decision.

If it is in regards to matters of belief it is best not to know it so as not to become confused or misled. Here ignorance is bless. Let the sediment pass.

Avos 5:20:1-7
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[20] Any dispute that is for the sake of Heaven will have a constructive outcome; but one that is not for the sake of Heaven will not have a constructive outcome. What sort of dispute was for the sake of Heaven? – The dispute between Hillel and Shammai. And which was not for the sake of Heaven? – The dispute of Korach and his entire company.

[ב] כל מחלוקת שהיא לשם שמים, סופה להתקיים; ושאינה לשם שמים, אין סופה להתקיים. איזו היא מחלוקת שהיא לשם שמים? זו מחלוקת הלל ושמאי. ושאינה לשם שמים? זו מחלוקת קרח וכל עדתו.

Whenever a dispute is for the sake of Heaven it will ultimately endure.

Sanhedrin 110a - One should not perpetuate strife. If the controversy serves a noble purpose it will result in long lasting value.

R' Yisroel Salanter - The greatest danger is to believe that your quarrel is for the sake of Heaven – for then the quarrel will endure and endure (Rabbi Dov Katz).

R' S.R. Hirsch – In a dispute that is truly 'l'shem Shamayim', both parties will have served to shed light on the subject and will have contributed to the proper understanding of the question.

Avos 5:20:1-7

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Rambam - Constructive outcome means even the opinion that is not adopted will be remembered and discussed.

Rav - An argument meant to discover the truth will be successful and the truth will eventually be discovered.

R Zorach Eideltz - If the argument is indeed for the sake of Heaven “its resolution” ‘sofo’, “will endure” ‘lehitkayeim’. An argument for its own sake and not for the sake of Heaven will reignite in time.

Meiri - If the dispute was sincere the disputants themselves will become good forbids by reaching agreement.

Rav - Disputants in a controversy for the sake of Heaven at the end they themselves will endure. Their end, ‘sofo’, will be to ‘lehitkayeim’ to endure and succeed.

Avos 5:20:8-13

[20] *Any dispute that is for the sake of Heaven will have a constructive outcome; but one that is not for the sake of Heaven will not have a constructive outcome. What sort of dispute was for the sake of Heaven? – The dispute between Hillel and Shammai. And which was not for the sake of Heaven? – The dispute of Korach and his entire company.*

[ב] כָּל מַחֲלָקֶת שֶׁהִיא לְשֵׁם שָׁמַיִם, סוּפָהּ לְהִתְקַיֵּם; וְשֶׁאֵינָהּ לְשֵׁם שָׁמַיִם, אֵין סוּפָהּ לְהִתְקַיֵּם. אִיזוֹ הִיא מַחֲלָקֶת שֶׁהִיא לְשֵׁם שָׁמַיִם? זוֹ מַחֲלָקֶת הִלֵּל וְשַׁמַּי. וְשֶׁאֵינָהּ לְשֵׁם שָׁמַיִם? זוֹ מַחֲלָקֶת קֹרַח וְכָל עֲדָתוֹ.

But one that is not for the sake of Heaven will not have a constructive outcome.

Machzor Vitry - If people argue in order to exert control or to triumph over each other.

Rav, R'Yonah - Then the disputants themselves will not survive.

Tiferes Yisroel - Even if only one of the disputants had a selfish motive nothing substantial will result.

Neither the arguments used nor the parties to the controversy will have a positive effect.

Avos 5:20:14-23

[20] Any dispute that is for the sake of Heaven will have a constructive outcome; but one that is not for the sake of Heaven will not have a constructive outcome. What sort of dispute was for the sake of Heaven? – The dispute between Hillel and Shammai. And which was not for the sake of Heaven? – The dispute of Korach and his entire company.

(ב) כל מחלוקת שהיא לשם שמים, סופה להתקיים; ושאינה לשם שמים, אין סופה להתקיים. איזו היא מחלוקת שהיא לשם שמים? זו מחלוקת הלל ושמאי. ושאינה לשם שמים? זו מחלוקת קרח וכל עדתו.

What sort of dispute was for the sake of Heaven? The dispute between Hillel and Shammai.

Rav, Yevamos 14b - The disputes between Hillel and Shammai. They were not concerned with triumph but for the sincere and true understanding of the Torah. And today, centuries later, their words are still studied and both sides are respected. Zohar - Even the dispute of the Evil influence with the Good influence is for the sake of Heaven. For man to earn his reward in Heaven he must choose to do good in spite of the enticement of the Evil influence. Therefore, Satan is ultimately in the service of the Good.

Avos 5:20:24-31

[20] Any dispute that is for the sake of Heaven will have a constructive outcome; but one that is not for the sake of Heaven will not have a constructive outcome. What sort of dispute was for the sake of Heaven? – The dispute between Hillel and Shammai. And which was not for the sake of Heaven? – The dispute of Korach and his entire company.

(ב) כל מחלוקת שהיא לשם שמים, סופה להתקיים; ושאינה לשם שמים, אין סופה להתקיים. איזו היא מחלוקת שהיא לשם שמים? זו מחלוקת הלל ושמאי. ושאינה לשם שמים? זו מחלוקת קרח וכל עדתו.

And which was not for the sake of Heaven the dispute of Korach and his entire company.

Korach - came to undermine Moses.

He came out of envy and contentiousness.

He came at a time of natural unrest. After the fiasco with the spies and after the people were told they would die in the wilderness. At this point of weakness he challenged Moshe. If Moshe could be shown to have appointed his brother Aaron improperly he could be accused of fabricating the commandments Tzitzis Mezuzah, a nation of priests, and thus deny the Divine origin of the Torah by holding these laws up to ridicule.

Midrash Shmuel - Notice that the Mishnah does not refer to both parties in the dispute Korach and Moshe as it does with Hillel and Shammai. Because Moshe was not really party to any dispute. He merely answered Korach in order to sanctify God's name.

Avos 5:21:1-9

[21] Whoever influences the masses to become meritorious shall not be the cause of sin; but one who influences the masses to sin will not be given the means to repent. Moses was meritorious and influenced the masses to be meritorious, so the merit of the masses was to his credit, as it is said: 'He performed the righteousness of HASHEM, and His laws together with

[כא] כל 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: „צדקת יהוה עשה, ומשפטיו עם ישראל.“¹ ירבעם בן נבט חטא והחטיא את הרבים, חטא הרבים תלוי בו, שנאמר: „על חטאות ירבעם אשר חטא, ואשר החטיא את ישראל.“²

Whoever strengthens the people (to be meritorious) no sin will be caused by him.

Rambam - A person who teaches others in the path of righteousness by teaching them Torah, fear of God and to do the commandments, will be kept from sinning himself.

Rashi, Meiri, Rav - Such a person deserves Divine protection (Yoma 87a)
It is inconceivable that his students should be in Heaven while he who elevated them should be in Gehinnom.

R' Yonah - The reward of a Mitzvah is another Mitzvah.

Yismach Moshe - One who expends his time teaching others will not suffer any loss in his spiritual or physical welfare because of it.

[21] *Whoever influences the masses to become meritorious shall not be the cause of sin; but one who influences the masses to sin will not be given the means to repent. Moses was meritorious and influenced the masses to be meritorious, so the merit of the masses was to his credit, as it is said: 'He performed the righteousness of HASHEM, and His laws together with Israel.'*¹ *Jeroboam ben Nebat sinned and caused the masses to sin, so the sin of the masses is charged against him, as it is said: 'For the sins of Jeroboam which he committed and which he caused Israel to commit.'*²

(כא) כל 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: „צדקת יהוה עשה, ומשפטיו עם ישראל.”¹ ירבעם בן נבט חטא והחטיא את הרבים, חטא הרבים תלוי בו, שנאמר: „על חטאות ירבעם אשר חטא, ואשר החטיא את ישראל.”²

But one who influences the people to sin will not be given the opportunity to repent.

Tiferes Yisroel - God will not help such a person to repent.

Yoma - So he will not be in Gan Eden and his students in Gehinnom.

Rashi, Meiri, Rav - He will be allowed to repent but will not receive any Divine assistance in doing so.

R Moshe Alshakar - A person who causes other persons to sin cannot fully repent for the simple reason that he cannot correct their errors for which he was responsible. Can a person be purified by immersing in a Mikvah while holding an impure creature (a sheretz) in his hand?

Avos 5:21:19-27

[21] *Whoever influences the masses to become meritorious shall not be the cause of sin; but one who influences the masses to sin will not be given the means to repent. Moses was meritorious and influenced the masses to be meritorious, so the merit of the masses was to his credit, as it is said: 'He performed the righteousness of HASHEM, and His laws together with Israel.'¹ Jeroboam ben Nebat sinned and caused the masses to sin, so the sin of the masses is charged against him, as it is said: 'For the sins of Jeroboam which he committed and which he caused Israel to commit.'²*

[כא] כל המזכה את הרבים, אין חטא בא על ידו; וכל המחטיא את הרבים, אין מספיקין בידו לעשות תשובה. משה זכה וזכה את הרבים, וזכות הרבים תלוי בו, שנאמר: „צדקת יהוה עשה, ומשפטיו עם ישראל.”¹ ירבעם בן נבט חטא והחטיא את הרבים, חטא הרבים תלוי בו, שנאמר: „על חטאות ירבעם אשר חטא, ואשר החטיא את ישראל.”²

Moses was meritorious and influenced the people to be meritorious so the merit of the people was to his credit.

Bava Basra 9a ‘gadol hamaaseh yoter min haoseh’, “greater is he who causes others to do (Mitzvos) than one who does Mitzvos himself”.

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[21] *Whoever influences the masses to become meritorious shall not be the cause of sin; but one who influences the masses to sin will not be given the means to repent. Moses was meritorious and influenced the masses to be meritorious, so the merit of the masses was to his credit, as it is said: 'He performed the righteousness of HASHEM, and His laws together with Israel.'*¹ *Jeroboam ben Nebat sinned and caused the masses to sin, so the sin of the masses is charged against him, as it is said: 'For the sins of Jeroboam which he committed and which he caused Israel to commit.'*²

[כא] *כל 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: „צדקת יהוה עשה, ומשפטיו עם ישראל.”*¹ *ירבעם בן נבט חטא והחטיא את הרבים, חטא הרבים תלוי בו, שנאמר: „על חטאות ירבעם אשר חטא, ואשר החטיא את ישראל.”*²

Jeroboam ben Nebat sinned and caused the people to sin, so therefore, the sin of the masses is charged against him.

He was a servant of King Solomon and led the separation of the 10 tribes in revolt against King Rehavam of Judah. He feared that if he went to the Temple in Jerusalem he would stand in the courtyard and while his rival sat on a throne reserved for legitimate heirs to the Davidic dynasty. So he created his own site of worship on Har Gerizem in the north and made two Golden Calves.

He sinned by preventing the people from going to Jerusalem for the pilgrimage festivals and for inducing them to serve idols (1 King 12).

Avos al Banim - one who brings others to sin is not granted God's attribute of “enduring patience” ‘erech apayim’ but he is punished immediately so he stops his ruinous influence on the lives of others.

Avos 5:22:1-12

[22] *Whoever has the following three traits is among the disciples of our forefather Abraham; and [whoever has] three different traits is among the disciples of the wicked Balaam. Those who have a good eye, a humble spirit, and a meek soul are among the disciples of our forefather Abraham. Those who have an evil eye, an arrogant spirit, and a greedy soul are among the disciples of the wicked Balaam. How are the disciples of our forefather Abraham different from the disciples of the wicked Balaam? The disciples of our forefather Abraham enjoy [the fruits of their good deeds] in this world and inherit the World to Come, as is said: 'To cause those who love Me to inherit an everlasting possession [the World to Come], and I will fill their storehouses [in this world]'.³ But the disciples of the wicked Balaam inherit Gehinnom and descend into the well of destruction, as is said: 'And You, O God, shall lower them into the well of destruction, men of bloodshed and deceit shall not live out half their days; but as for me, I will trust in You.'⁴*

[כב] כל מי שיש בידו שלשה דברים הללו, הוא מתלמידיו של אברהם אבינו; ושלשה דברים אחרים, הוא מתלמידיו של בלעם הרשע. עין טובה, ורוח נמוכה, ונפש שפלה, תלמידיו של אברהם אבינו. עין רעה, ורוח גבוהה, ונפש רחבה, תלמידיו של בלעם הרשע. מה בין תלמידיו של אברהם אבינו לתלמידיו של בלעם הרשע? תלמידיו של אברהם אבינו אוכלין בעולם הזה, ונוחלין העולם הבא, שנאמר: „להנחיל אהבי יש, ואצרותיהם אמלא“.³ אבל תלמידיו של בלעם הרשע יורשין גיהנם, ויורדין לבאר שחת, שנאמר: „ואתה אלהים תורדם לבאר שחת, אנשי דמים ומרמה לא יחצו ימיהם, ואני אבטח בך.“⁴

Whoever has the following three traits is among the disciples of our forefather Abraham.

Meiri, Rav - These three are the bedrock of the type of ethical development that makes one a follower of Abraham.

R' Yonah - If a person lacks these, even if he possesses other attributes, he cannot be numbered among the disciples of Abraham.

Tiferes Yisroel - By subscribing to the moral code mentioned in this Mishnah even a non-Jew can become a disciple of Abraham. Recall, Abraham is “father of a multitude of nations” (Gen 17:4).

Avos 5:22:13-20

[22] *Whoever has the following three traits is among the disciples of our forefather Abraham; and [whoever has] three different traits is among the disciples of the wicked Balaam. Those who have a good eye, a humble spirit, and a meek soul are among the disciples of our forefather Abraham. Those who have an evil eye, an arrogant spirit, and a greedy soul are among the disciples of the wicked Balaam. How are the disciples of our forefather Abraham different from the disciples of the wicked Balaam? The disciples of our forefather Abraham enjoy [the fruits of their good deeds] in this world and inherit the World to Come, as is said: 'To cause those who love Me to inherit an everlasting possession [the World to Come], and I will fill their storehouses [in this world]'.³ But the disciples of the wicked Balaam inherit Gehinnom and descend into the well of destruction, as is said: 'And You, O God, shall lower them into the well of destruction, men of bloodshed and deceit shall not live out half their days; but as for me, I will trust in You.'⁴*

[כב] כָּל מִי שֵׁשׁ בְּיָדוֹ שְׁלֹשָׁה דְּבָרִים הַלָּלוּ, הוּא מִתְלַמֵּידוֹ שֶׁל אַבְרָהָם אָבִינוּ; וְשְׁלֹשָׁה דְּבָרִים אֲחֵרִים, הוּא מִתְלַמֵּידוֹ שֶׁל בַּלַּעַם הָרָשָׁע. עֵין טוֹבָה, וְרוּחַ נְמוּכָה, וְנֶפֶשׁ שְׂפֵלָה, תְּלַמִּידוֹ שֶׁל אַבְרָהָם אָבִינוּ. עֵין רָעָה, וְרוּחַ גְּבוּהָה, וְנֶפֶשׁ רַחֲבָה, תְּלַמִּידוֹ שֶׁל בַּלַּעַם הָרָשָׁע. מַה בֵּין תְּלַמִּידוֹ שֶׁל אַבְרָהָם אָבִינוּ לְתַלְמִידוֹ שֶׁל בַּלַּעַם הָרָשָׁע? תְּלַמִּידוֹ שֶׁל אַבְרָהָם אָבִינוּ אוֹכְלִין בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה, וְנוֹחְלִין הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא, שְׁנֵאֲמַר: „לִהְנוּחִיל אֶהְבִּי יֵשׁ, וְאַצְרִיתֵהֶם אִמְלֵא“.³ אָבֵל תְּלַמִּידוֹ שֶׁל בַּלַּעַם הָרָשָׁע יוֹרְשִׁין גֵּיהֵנוֹם, וְיוֹרְדִין לְבָאֵר שְׁחַת, שְׁנֵאֲמַר: „וְאַתָּה אֱלֹהִים תּוֹרֵדֵם לְבָאֵר שְׁחַת, אֲנָשֵׁי דָמִים וּמְרֻמָּה לֹא יִחְצוּ יְמֵיהֶם, וְאֲנִי אֲבַטַח בָּךְ.“⁴

And whoever has three different traits is among the disciple of the wicked Balaam.

Chida - Three fatal faults are jealousy, lust, and glory.

Nesivos Shalom - Such people are so busy with themselves they have no time for others.

Avos 5:22:21-22, 23-24, 25-26

[22] *Whoever has the following three traits is among the disciples of our forefather Abraham; and [whoever has] three different traits is among the disciples of the wicked Balaam. Those who have a good eye, a humble spirit, and a meek soul are among the disciples of our forefather Abraham. Those who have an evil eye, an arrogant spirit, and a greedy soul are among the disciples of the wicked Balaam. How are the disciples of our forefather Abraham different from the disciples of the wicked Balaam? The disciples of our forefather Abraham enjoy [the fruits of their good deeds] in this world and inherit the World to Come, as is said: 'To cause those who love Me to inherit an everlasting possession [the World to Come], and I will fill their storehouses [in this world]'.³ But the disciples of the wicked Balaam inherit Gehinnom and descend into the well of destruction, as is said: 'And You, O God, shall lower them into the well of destruction, men of bloodshed and deceit shall not live out half their days; but as for me, I will trust in You.'⁴*

[כב] כָּל מִי שֵׁשׁ בְּיָדוֹ שְׁלֹשָׁה דְּבָרִים הַלָּלוּ, הוּא מִתְלַמְּדֵיּוֹ שֶׁל אַבְרָהָם אָבִינוּ; וְשְׁלֹשָׁה דְּבָרִים אֲחֵרִים, הוּא מִתְלַמְּדֵיּוֹ שֶׁל בְּלָעָם הָרָשָׁע. עֵין טוֹבָה, וְרוּחַ נְמוּכָה, וְנֶפֶשׁ שְׂפֵלָה, תְּלַמְּדֵיּוֹ שֶׁל אַבְרָהָם אָבִינוּ. עֵין רָעָה, וְרוּחַ גְּבוּהָה, וְנֶפֶשׁ רַחֲבָה, תְּלַמְּדֵיּוֹ שֶׁל בְּלָעָם הָרָשָׁע. מֶה בֵּין תְּלַמְּדֵיּוֹ שֶׁל אַבְרָהָם אָבִינוּ לְתַלְמִידֵיּוֹ שֶׁל בְּלָעָם הָרָשָׁע? תְּלַמְּדֵיּוֹ שֶׁל אַבְרָהָם אָבִינוּ אוֹכְלִין בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה, וְנוֹחֲלִין הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: „לְהַנְחִיל אֶהְבִּי יֵשׁ, וְאַצְרִיתֵהֶם אִמְלֵא“.³ אָבֵל תְּלַמְּדֵיּוֹ שֶׁל בְּלָעָם הָרָשָׁע יוֹרְשִׁין גִּיהֵנוֹם, וְיוֹרְדִין לְבָאֵר שְׁחַת, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: „וְאַתָּה אֱלֹהִים תּוֹרְדֵם לְבָאֵר שְׁחַת, אֲנָשֵׁי דָמִים וּמִרְמָה לֹא יַחֲצוּ יְמֵיהֶם, וְאֲנִי אֲבַטַח בָּךְ.“⁴

Those who have a good eye: 21-22

Rashi - One who does not see the honor or possessions of others with jealousy. He is happy at another person's success.

Rambam, Rav - Sees what he has and is satisfied with his portion – his lot in life

Sfas Emes - he has a positive outlook.

Tiferes Yisroel - He sees God's goodness in everything around him.

A humble spirit: 23-24 - is humble and modest.

And an understanding soul: 25-26

Meiri, Rav - He can exercise restraint and self control.

Tiferes Yisroel - He is satisfied with his lot.

Midrash Shmuel - He has learned to diminish his animal instincts. He possesses an undemanding soul.

Avos 5:23:5-7

[23] Yehudah ben Tema said: Be bold as a leopard, light as an eagle, swift as a deer, and strong as a lion, to carry out the will of your Father in Heaven.

[כג] יהודה בן תימא אומר: הוי עז כנמר, וקל כנשר, רץ כצבי, וגבור
כארי לעשות רצון אביך שבשמים.

Be bold as a leopard.

In the pursuit of spiritual opportunities be fearless and ambitious do not consider that such spiritual activities are only for the truly righteous.

Chuddushei HaRim - Dream the impossible.

Rav - Don't be afraid to question your teachers, Don't be ashamed to ask questions. A bashful person cannot learn Avos 2:6.

Tiferes Yisroel - A leopard is not as strong as many other beasts but boldly takes on tasks that seem too much for it. Likewise, you should tackle large and worthwhile projects that seem too much for you. Be bold and you will succeed. Don't say I can't do it. That it is too much. No, That is the evil inclination speaking to you.

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Avos 5:23:8-9

[23] Yehudah ben Tema said: Be bold as a leopard, light as an eagle, swift as a deer, and strong as a lion, to carry out the will of your Father in Heaven.

[כג] יהודה בן תימא אומר: הוי עז כנמר, וקל כנשר, רץ כצבי, וגבור כארי לעשות רצון אביך שבשמים.

Be light as an eagle.

Rav, Magen Avos - A student may rise above all his contemporaries by the aid of incessant review.

Tur - The eagle is swift and agile and man can use that example to recoil easily from the enticement of evil.

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[23] Yehudah ben Tema said: Be bold as a leopard, light as an eagle, swift as a deer, and strong as a lion, to carry out the will of your Father in Heaven.

[כג] יהודה בן תימא אומר: הוי עז כנמר, וקל כנשר, רץ כצבי, וגבור כארי לעשות רצון אביך שבשמים.

Be swift as a deer.

Rav, Tur - One should chase after all opportunities to perform Mitzvot. Train your legs to run instinctively to help another person and do a Mitzvah immediately without procrastination.

Tzidkos HaTzaddik - seize the moment of inspiration.

Ex 12:17 - ‘You shall safeguard the Matzos’ - even a bit of moisture or a moment of delay may cause the dough to become Chametz (Leavened). - Matzos – Mitzvos don’t delay or the Mitzvah may be ruined.

R’ Yonah - Like a deer that does not tire one will never weary in pursuit of Mitzvot or Torah study.

Midrash Shmuel - A deer constantly looks over it’s shoulder to see if a hunter is pursuing it. Likewise, we should watch out for the evil inclination that it not gain on us. And make sure that those behind you, your children and grandchildren are following closely your lead.

[23] Yehudah ben Tema said: Be bold as a leopard, light as an eagle, swift as a deer, and strong as a lion, to carry out the will of your Father in Heaven.

[בג] יהודה בן תימא אומר: הוי עז כנמר, וקל כנשר, רץ כצבי, וגבור
כארי לעשות רצון אביך שבשמים.

Be strong as a lion.

Rashi, R' Yonah - Just as a lion is King of the forest and in full control of all his strength and faculties, so man should use his intellectual, emotional and physical energies with purpose toward lofty goals.

Tur - One should emulate the lion and approach the service of God with a strong heart and iron will.

Rav, Magen Avos - And have the fortitude to defend oneself against the onslaughts of the Evil Inclination.

Ben Zoma Avos 4:2 - Who is strong? He who subdues him personal inclination.

The Idiom's "light (or swift) as an Eagle" and "brave as a lion" came from King David's eulogy of Saul and Jonathan (11 Samuel 1:23).

Avos 5:23:14-17

[23] Yehudah ben Tema said: Be bold as a leopard, light as an eagle, swift as a deer, and strong as a lion, to carry out the will of your Father in Heaven.

[כג] יהודה בן תימא אומר: הוי עז כנמר, וקל כנשר, רץ כצבי, וגבור כארי לעשות רצון אביה שבשמים.

To carry out the will of your father in Heaven.

Boldness as in ‘bold as a leopard’ can suggest arrogance.

Lightness as in ‘light as an eagle’ can suggest superficiality.

Swiftness as in ‘swift as a deer’ can suggest impulsiveness.

And strength as in ‘strong as a lion’ can suggest cruel aggression.

But all these possible negative connotations become positive if they are used in the service of God.

Avos 5:24:4-6

[24] *He used to say: The brazen goes to Gehinnom, but the shamefaced goes to the Garden of Eden. May it be Your will, HASHEM, our God and the God of our forefathers, that the Holy Temple be rebuilt, speedily in our days, and grant us our share in Your Torah.*

[כד] הוא היה אומר: עו פנים לגיהנם, ובשׂת פנים לגן עדן. יהי רצון מלפניך יהוה אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו שיבנה בית המקדש במהרה בימינו ותן חלקנו בתורתך.

The brazen go to Gehinom.

Beware of brazenness in worldly matters but be aggressive in heavenly matters.
Arrogance and obstinacy, are emotions worn on one's face, 'panim'.

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Avos 5:24:7-10

[24] *He used to say: The brazen goes to Gehinnom, but the shamefaced goes to the Garden of Eden. May it be Your will, HASHEM, our God and the God of our forefathers, that the Holy Temple be rebuilt, speedily in our days, and grant us our share in Your Torah.*

[כד] הוא היה אומר: עו פנים לגיהנם, ובשם פנים לגן עדן. יהי רצון מלפניך יהוה אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו שיבנה בית המקדש במהרה בימינו ותן חלקנו בתורתך.

But the shame faced go to the Garden of Eden.

Nedarim 20a - Such people will not easily come to sin.

Meiri - Such a person will be eager to do good and avoid sin, since he will be easily embarrassed if others know of his sins or if his reputation is damaged.

Rambam - The ability to feel shame when contemplating sin is a great gift.

Yevamos 97a - The Jewish people have three traits: shame, compassion and kindness.

Avos 5:24:11-25

[24] *He used to say: The brazen goes to Gehinnom, but the shamefaced goes to the Garden of Eden. May it be Your will, HASHEM, our God and the God of our forefathers, that the Holy Temple be rebuilt, speedily in our days, and grant us our share in Your Torah.*

[כד] הוא היה אומר: עו פנים לגיהנום, ובשׂת פנים לגן עדן. יהי רצון מלפניך יהוה אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו שיבנה בית המקדש במהרה בימינו ותן חלקנו בתורתך.

May it be your will O God....That the Temple be rebuilt in our day.

R' Akiva Eiger - This prayer is a reaction to the volatile nature of brazenness. Students who lack it may be ashamed to ask questions and will not succeed. But there can be bad side effects. Therefore, we pray for the Temple, the Messianic age, where we will no longer need brazenness as a tool for success in Torah Study.

Maharal - The Torah is the intellectual power and the Temple is the heart of Judaism. As we ask for our share in God's Torah we also ask for the rebuilding of the heart.

B'Nayos B'Ramah - obstinacy is increasing therefore, we need redemption promptly.

[כה] הוא היה אומר: בן חמש שנים למקרא, בן עשר שנים למשנה, בן
 שלש עשרה למצות, בן חמש עשרה לגמרא, בן שמונה עשרה
 לחפה, בן עשרים לרדוף, בן שלשים לפח, בן ארבעים לבינה, בן
 חמשים לעצה, בן ששים לזקנה, בן שבעים לשיבה, בן שמונים לגבורה,
 בן תשעים לשוח, בן מאה כאלו מת ועבר ובטל מן העולם.

[25] He used to say: A five-year-old begins Scripture; a ten-year-old begins Mishnah; a thirteen-year-old becomes obliged to observe the commandments; a fifteen-year-old begins the study of Gemara; an eighteen-year-old goes to the marriage canopy; a twenty-year-old begins pursuit [of a livelihood]; a thirty-year-old attains full strength; a forty-year-old attains understanding; a fifty-year-old can offer counsel; a sixty year-old attains seniority; a seventy-year-old attains a ripe old age; an eighty-year-old shows strength; a ninety-year-old becomes stooped over; a hundred-year-old is as if he were dead, passed away and ceased from the world.

A five year old begins scripture

In the 4th year of life he should be taught the letters of the alphabet. In his 5th year he should learn how to read, Lev 19:23-25.

“For 3 years the fruit may not be eaten. In its 4th year the fruit shall be sanctified to God, (learn letters). In its fifth year one may eat its fruit” i.e., (learn to read).

The fruit is the Torah. The tree is the child.

Avos 5:25:8-11

[25] *He used to say: A five-year-old begins Scripture; a ten-year-old begins Mishnah; a thirteen-year-old becomes obliged to observe the commandments; a fifteen-year-old begins the study of Gemara; an eighteen-year-old goes to the marriage canopy; a twenty-year-old begins pursuit [of a livelihood]; a thirty-year-old attains full strength; a forty-year-old attains understanding; a fifty-year-old can offer counsel; a sixty year-old attains seniority; a seventy-year-old attains a ripe old age; an eighty-year-old shows strength; a ninety-year-old becomes stooped over; a hundred-year-old is as if he were dead, passed away and ceased from the world.*

[כה] הוא היה אומר: בן חמש שנים למקרא, בן עשר שנים למשנה, בן שלש עשרה למצות, בן חמש עשרה לגמרא, בן שמונה עשרה לחפה, בן עשרים לרדוף, בן שלשים לכח, בן ארבעים לבינה, בן חמשים לעצה, בן ששים לזקנה, בן שבעים לשיבה, בן שמונים לגבורה, בן תשעים לשוח, בן מאה כאלו מת ועבר ובטל מן העולם.

At age 10 he begins Mishnah

Between age 5 and 10 a child should be taught only scripture.

Rashi - Simple Mishnah without elaborate commentaries.

Midrash Shmuel - Mishnah is part of the oral law and with his uncluttered mind a youngster can memorize vast amounts of material.

Avos 5:25:12-15

[25] *He used to say: A five-year-old begins Scripture; a ten-year-old begins Mishnah; a thirteen-year-old becomes obliged to observe the commandments; a fifteen-year-old begins the study of Gemara; an eighteen-year-old goes to the marriage canopy; a twenty-year-old begins pursuit [of a livelihood]; a thirty-year-old attains full strength; a forty-year-old attains understanding; a fifty-year-old can offer counsel; a sixty year-old attains seniority; a seventy-year-old attains a ripe old age; an eighty-year-old shows strength; a ninety-year-old becomes stooped over; a hundred-year-old is as if he were dead, passed away and ceased from the world.*

[כה] הוא הִיהָ אומר: בן חֲמִשׁ שָׁנִים לְמִקְרָא, בן עֶשֶׂר שָׁנִים לְמִשְׁנָה, בן שְׁלֹשׁ עֶשְׂרֵה לְמִצְוֹת, בן חֲמִשׁ עֶשְׂרֵה לְגִמְרָא, בן שְׁמוֹנֶה עֶשְׂרֵה לְחָפָה, בן עֶשְׂרִים לְרִדּוּף, בן שְׁלֹשִׁים לְכָח, בן אַרְבָּעִים לְבִינָה, בן חֲמִשִּׁים לְעֶצָה, בן שְׁשִׁים לְזָקָה, בן שִׁבְעִים לְשִׁיבָה, בן שְׁמוֹנִים לְגְבוּרָה, בן תְּשַׁעִים לְשׁוּחַ, בן מֵאָה כְּאִלוּ מֵת וְעָבַר וּבָטַל מִן הָעוֹלָם.

A 13 year old becomes obligated to observe the commandments

if he is a male and a female becomes obligated at age twelve. Where in the Torah do we learn this rule?

Numbers 5:6 - imposes responsibility for transgressions on someone considered a man or a woman, ‘Eish or Eishah’.

Genesis 34 - gives us the definition of ‘Eish’ where “each man took his sword” ‘Eish Charbo’. Shimon and Levi took their swords to avenge the honor of their sister.

Midrash - tells us that Levi was 13 years old at the time.

Rashi to Nazir 29b - whenever the Torah uses the term Eish it refers to a male at least 13 years old.

Alternatively - Rashi suggests that 13 and 12 are the ages of puberty.

Meiri – Midrash – Isaiah 43:21 “I fashioned “this people” ‘Amzu’ for myself, that it might declare my praise”. The numerical value of Zu. Zayin – 7, vov -6, is 13 the age at which a male becomes a full fledged member of God’s people.

Avos 5:25:16-19

[25] *He used to say: A five-year-old begins Scripture; a ten-year-old begins Mishnah; a thirteen-year-old becomes obliged to observe the commandments; a fifteen-year-old begins the study of Gemara; an eighteen-year-old goes to the marriage canopy; a twenty-year-old begins pursuit [of a livelihood]; a thirty-year-old attains full strength; a forty-year-old attains understanding; a fifty-year-old can offer counsel; a sixty year-old attains seniority; a seventy-year-old attains a ripe old age; an eighty-year-old shows strength; a ninety-year-old becomes stooped over; a hundred-year-old is as if he were dead, passed away and ceased from the world.*

[כה] הוא היה אומר: בן חמש שנים למקרא, בן עשר שנים למשנה, בן שלש עשרה למצות, בן חמש עשרה לגמרא, בן שמונה עשרה לחפה, בן עשרים לרדוף, בן שלשים לכח, בן ארבעים לבונה, בן חמשים לעצה, בן ששים לזקנה, בן שבעים לשיבה, בן שמונים לגבורה, בן תשעים לשוח, בן מאה כאלו מת ועבר ובטל מן העולם.

A fifteen year old begins to study Gemara

Gemara - is a discussion elucidating the logic and reason for the statements given in the Mishnah.

Rashi – Talmud is the combination of Mishnah and Gemara. Succah 28a and Bava Metzia 33a.

Tiferes Yisroel - by that age a person who has studied Mishnah for 5 years and scripture for 10 years will be able to make the transition to the Torah commentaries. He will be sufficiently familiar with the fundamental concepts.

Gemara from the term 'ligmor' "to finish". This work 'completes' the Torah.

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[כה] הוא היה אומר: בן חמש שנים למקרא, בן עשר שנים למשנה, בן שלש עשרה למצות, בן חמש עשרה לגמרא, בן שמונה עשרה לחפה, בן עשרים לרדוף, בן שלשים לכח, בן ארבעים לבניה, בן חמשים לעצה, בן ששים לזקנה, בן שבעים לשיבה, בן שמונים לגבורה, בן תשעים לשות, בן מאה כאלו מת ועבר ובטל מן העולם.

An eighteen year old goes to the marriage canopy.

R'Akiva Eiger - a man should get married at the beginning of his 18th year.

Machzor Vitry - before that age the burden of supporting a wife will impede his opportunity for growth in Torah study (Kiddushin 29b).

Rashi, Rav - The word man is written 19 times in Genesis from the beginning until the naming of Eve. The first time teaches us Adam's name the remaining 18 alludes to the fact that man does not become complete until he marries, which he should do at age eighteen.

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[כה] הוא הִיהָ אֹמֵר: בֶּן חֲמִשׁ שָׁנִים לְמִקְרָא, בֶּן עֶשֶׂר שָׁנִים לְמִשְׁנָה, בֶּן שְׁלֹשׁ עָשָׂר לְמִצְוֹת, בֶּן חֲמִשׁ עָשָׂר לְגִמְרָא, בֶּן שְׁמוֹנֶה עָשָׂר לְחַפָּה, בֶּן עֶשְׂרִים לְרֵדוּף, בֶּן שְׁלֹשִׁים לְכַח, בֶּן אַרְבָּעִים לְבִינָה, בֶּן חֲמִשִּׁים לְעֵצָה, בֶּן שִׁשִּׁים לְזִקְנָה, בֶּן שִׁבְעִים לְשִׁיבָה, בֶּן שְׁמוֹנִים לְגְבוּרָה, בֶּן תְּשַׁעִים לְשׁוּחַ, בֶּן מֵאָה כְּאֵלוֹ מֵת וְעֵבֶר וּבָטֵל מִן הָעוֹלָם.

A 20 year old begins the pursuit of a livelihood.

Rashi - This is the age when the Heavenly court pursues man for his actions. Holding him liable for his sins as we note it was only those over age 20 who were punished at the time of the spies who defamed the Land (Num 14:29).

Meiri - Kiddushin 29b - as one approaches 20 his bones begin to deteriorate, means there is a breakdown in his moral and spiritual strength.

Rav, Tiferes Yisroel - The pursuit of a livelihood naturally follows soon after marriage.

Avos 5:25:27-29

[25] *He used to say: A five-year-old begins Scripture; a ten-year-old begins Mishnah; a thirteen-year-old becomes obliged to observe the commandments; a fifteen-year-old begins the study of Gemara; an eighteen-year-old goes to the marriage canopy; a twenty-year-old begins pursuit [of a livelihood]; a thirty-year-old attains full strength; a forty-year-old attains understanding; a fifty-year-old can offer counsel; a sixty year-old attains seniority; a seventy-year-old attains a ripe old age; an eighty-year-old shows strength; a ninety-year-old becomes stooped over; a hundred-year-old is as if he were dead, passed away and ceased from the world.*

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A thirty year old attains full strength

Rashi, Rav – Numbers 4:2-3 only from age 30 were the Levites allowed to carry, erect and dismantle the tabernacle and load and unload the wagons that carried the beams and heavy vessels.

Midrash Shmuel - Koach means the power to influence others by the knowledge one has attained by previous years of study.

Avos 5:25:30-32

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A forty year old attains understanding.

Tiferes Yisroel – ‘binah’ means insight as to the deeper meanings of an idea or fact, intellectual perception.

Rashi - This type of deep understanding permits a person to rule on questions of halachah.

Avodah Zarah 5b - A student does not fully understand his teacher until after 40 years.

Deut 29:3 - “until this day” 40 years after leaving Egypt the people could finally appreciate and understand the degree of gratitude we must have toward Hashem.

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A fifty year old can offer advice.

Num 8:25 – 50 was the age at which the Levites were no longer considered fit for heavy work but served as guides and counselors to the younger Levites.

Rashi, Rav - at this age one can use his experience and intellect to advise others.

Tiferes Yisroel - he is better able to weigh various options and give his opinion.

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A sixty year old attains seniority (in old age).

Kiddushin 32b - The word “Zakein” is a contraction of the words ‘zeh kanah’, this person has attained (wisdom).

Tiferes Yisroel - Zakein refers to intellectual maturity.

Moed Katan 28a - One who lives past 60 has avoided the punishment of a premature death.

Meiri - This is the age when a person should contemplate his death and give more attention to his duties toward God.

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A seventy year old attains a ripe old age.

Berachos 12b Rashi - R' Elazar ben Azariah was appointed Nasi at age 18 but his hair turned white giving him a distinguished appearance that would help him gain the respect of the people.

Rav (I Chronicles 29:28) - King David died at age 70 and it is described that he died 'beshivah tovah' in the fullness of years.

Seder Hayom – interprets 'Sevah' as related to 'teshuvah' "repentance". When a person sees his hair turn white it is time in life for him to do 'teshuvah' for he is reminded that his days are numbered.

Leviticus 19:32 - "before an old person you shall stand". Before old age arrives stand up to your Evil Inclination – Zohar.

Avos 5:25:42-44

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An eighty year old shows strength.

Tiferes Yisroel - as one's strength begins to wane his spiritual force becomes dominant in his life making it easier to study Torah and to fulfill the Mitzvos.

Rashi - God strengthens him with spiritual vigor.

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Avos 5:26:1-4

[26] Ben Bag Bag says: Delve in it [the Torah] and continue to delve in it [the Torah] for everything is in it; look deeply into it; grow old and gray over it, and do not stir from it, for you can have no better portion than it.
Ben Hei Hei says: The reward is in proportion to the exertion.

[בן] בן בג בג אומר: הפך בה והפך בה, דכלה בה; ובה תחוי, וסיב
ובלה בה, ומנה לא תזוע, שאין לך מדה טובה הימנה. בן הא הא אומר:
לפום צערא אגרא.

Ben Bag Bag says

Rambam - Ben Bag Bag is an acronym of ‘ben ger- ben giorus’, Ben Heh Heh alludes to the first proselytes Abram and Sari to whose names God added a “hei”. Both names suggest they were descendants of proselytes.

Avos 5:26:1-3, 24-26

[26] Ben Bag Bag says: Delve in it [the Torah] and continue to delve in it [the Torah] for everything is in it; look deeply into it; grow old and gray over it, and do not stir from it, for you can have no better portion than it. Ben Hei Hei says: The reward is in proportion to the exertion.

[כו] בן בג בג אומר: הפך בה והפך בה, דכלה בה; ובה תחוי, וסיב
ובלה בה, ומנה לא תווע, שאין לך מדה טובה הימנה. בן הא הא אומר:
לפום צערא אגרא.

Ben Bag Bag – Ben Heh Heh

Is said to be a disciple of Hillel. His name was Johanan (BT Kiddushin 10b) and either he was a son of a proselyte Ben, Ben-Ger and Bath-Ger indicating that his father and mother had been proselytes or he himself was a proselyte. The letters ‘bais’ and ‘gimmel’ have the numerical value of ‘5’ ‘heh’ the same letter added to Abram and Sari to make them Abraham and Sarah. They were the parents of all proselytes as suggested by Tosophos in Hagigah 9b. Ben Bag Bag may be the same man as Ben Heh Heh since each name has the same numerical value.

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[כו] בן בג בג אומר: הפך בה והפך בה, דכלה בה; ובה תחיו, וסיב
ובלה בה, ומנה לא תווע, שאין לך מדה טובה הימנה. בן הא הא אומר:
לפום צערא אגרא.

Turn it this way, turn it that way, everything is in it.

Rashi – study the Torah again and again and you will discover something new in it each time.

Meiri – do not be content with a superficial reading of the Torah. Study it deeply and you will find great value in it.

Avos 5:26:5-8

[26] Ben Bag Bag says: Delve in it [the Torah] and continue to delve in it [the Torah] for everything is in it; look deeply into it; grow old and gray over it, and do not stir from it, for you can have no better portion than it.
Ben Hei Hei says: *The reward is in proportion to the exertion.*

[בן] בן בג בג אומר: הִפֵּךְ בָּהּ וְהִפֵּךְ בָּהּ, דִּכְלָהּ בָּהּ; וּבָהּ תַּחֲוִי, וְסִיב
וּבִלָּה בָּהּ, וּמָנָה לֹא תִזְוַע, שֶׁאֵין לָךְ מַדָּה טוֹבָה הַיְמָנָה. בֵּן הָא הָא אֹמֵר:
לְפֹם צִעָרָא אֲגָרָא.

Delve in it (The Torah) and continue to delve into it.

Rashi - Study the Torah incessantly as a constant preoccupation.

Tosophos Yom Tov - You will discover new facets of Torah everytime you review your Torah studies.

Meiri - Repeat study will clarify that which has not been clear to you.

Tiferes Yisroel - The term ‘hafachbah’ is repeated “delve into it”, on an ongoing lifelong basis.

Mili d’Avos - Even if one has not been a successful student of Torah continue to delve into it and it will share its riches with you and you will find success.

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Avos 5:26:9-10

[26] Ben Bag Bag says: Delve in it [the Torah] and continue to delve in it [the Torah] for everything is in it; look deeply into it; grow old and gray over it, and do not stir from it, for you can have no better portion than it. Ben Hei Hei says: The reward is in proportion to the exertion.

[כו] בן בג בג אומר: הפך בה והפך בה, דכלה בה; ובה תחזי, וסיב וכלה בה, ומנה לא תזוע, שאין לך מדה טובה הימנה. בן הא הא אומר: לפום צערא אגרא.

For everything is in it.

R Yonah - The Torah is a guide to life, all the world's wisdom is in it.

Rambam - was challenged by a student named Avner when he taught this principle in Avos that the Torah contains everything it it and can even foretell the future. Avner was critical of Judaism and had flirted with conversion to another faith, and challenged Rambam. “If that is so tell me where my name and my future is told in the Torah”. Rambam answered in Haazinu Deut 32:26 it says, ‘Aphehem ashbisah maenosh zichram’. Your name is made up of the third letter in each of the 4 words aleph, bais, num, resh and it means “I will scatter them; I will cause their memory to cease from man”.

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Avos 5:26:11-12

[26] Ben Bag Bag says: Delve in it [the Torah] and continue to delve in it [the Torah] for everything is in it; look deeply into it; grow old and gray over it, and do not stir from it, for you can have no better portion than it. Ben Hei Hei says: The reward is in proportion to the exertion.

[כו] בן בג בג אומר: הפך בה והפך בה, וכלה בה; ובה תחזי, וסיב ובלה בה, ומנה לא תזוע, שאין לך מדה טובה הימנה. בן הא הא אומר: לפום צערא אגרא.

Look deeply into it.

Rashi - because the Torah yields its messages only after one penetrates the surface.

Rambam, Sefer HaMussar - Translates ‘uvah techezeh’ as “and through it you will view”.

Knowledge of Torah will allow you to see the truth to become enlightened to have all spiritual darkness removed, and see with spiritual clarity.

Baal Shem Tov - taught that the primordial light that God hid away for the righteous (Gen 1:4) is found in the Torah.

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Avos 5:26:13-15

[26] Ben Bag Bag says: Delve in it [the Torah] and continue to delve in it [the Torah] for everything is in it; look deeply into it; grow old and gray over it, and do not stir from it, for you can have no better portion than it. Ben Hei Hei says: The reward is in proportion to the exertion.

[כו] בן בג בג אומר: הפך בה והפך בה, דכלה בה; ובה תחוי, וסיב ובלה בה, ומנה לא תווע, שאין לך מדה טובה הימנה. בן הא הא אומר: לפום צערא אגרא.

Grow old and grey over it.

Rambam, Rav - Even in old age one must toil in Torah study.

Tiferes Yisroel - the study of Torah is rejuvenating and gives even an older person youthful freshness.

R Yonah - Even in old age when one no longer has physical strength that intense study requires one must still do one's best to study Torah.

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Avos 5:26:19-23

[26] Ben Bag Bag says: Delve in it [the Torah] and continue to delve in it [the Torah] for everything is in it; look deeply into it; grow old and gray over it, and do not stir from it, for you can have no better portion than it. Ben Hei Hei says: The reward is in proportion to the exertion.

[כו] בן בג בג אומר: הפך בה והפך בה, דכלה בה; ובה תחוי, וסיב
ובלה בה, ומנה לא תזוע, שאין לך מדה טובה הימנה. בן הא הא אומר:
לפום צערא אגרא.

Do not stir from it.

Rashi - Day or night a person should never abandon his study of Torah.

Midrash Shmuel - “from it one may learn not to stir”. Torah knowledge inspires a strong sense of confidence and other pursuits are not necessary. Also, one need not fear anything or anyone but God.

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Avos 5:26:19-23

[26] Ben Bag Bag says: Delve in it [the Torah] and continue to delve in it [the Torah] for everything is in it; look deeply into it; grow old and gray over it, and do not stir from it, for you can have no better portion than it.
Ben Hei Hei says: The reward is in proportion to the exertion.

[כו] בן בג בג אומר: הפך בה והפך בה, דכלה בה; ובה תחוי, וסיב
ובלה בה, ומנה לא תזוע, שאין לך מדה טובה הימנה. בן הא הא אומר:
לפום צערא אגרא.

For you can have no better portion than it.

Yiddish lullaby - Torah is in fact the best merchandise.

Shabbos 127a - Torah allows man to enjoy its fruits in this world and still store it away for benefit in the world to come.

Sefer HaMussar - No investment is as profitable as the time spent by trying to understand the word of God.

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Avos 5:26:24-30

[26] *Ben Bag Bag says: Delve in it [the Torah] and continue to delve in it [the Torah] for everything is in it; look deeply into it; grow old and gray over it, and do not stir from it, for you can have no better portion than it.*
Ben Hei Hei says: The reward is in proportion to the exertion.

[כו] בן בג בג אומר: הפך בה והפך בה, דכלה בה; ובה תחזי, וסיב
ובלה בה, ומנה לא תזוע, שאין לך מדה טובה הימנה. בן הא הא אומר:
לפום צערא אגרא.

Ben Hei Hei says: The reward is proportional to the effort

Mussar Avos - warn converts of the terrible oppression the Jews suffer. But if he still desires to join encourage him that, ‘The reward is in proportion to the exertion’.

Rashi, Rav - The reward for observing commandments is in proportion to the difficulty of their performance.

Midrash Shmuel - The reward for Torah study is not judged by your success but by your effort. This gives solace to those who are not intellectually gifted.

[26] Ben Bag Bag says: Delve in it [the Torah] and continue to delve in it [the Torah] for everything is in it; look deeply into it; grow old and gray over it, and do not stir from it, for you can have no better portion than it. Ben Hei Hei says: The reward is in proportion to the exertion.

[בן] בן בג בג אומר: הקפך בה והקפך בה, דכלה בה; ובה תחזי, וסיב
ובלה בה, ומנה לא תזוע, שאין לך מדה טובה הימנה. בן הא הא אומר:
לפום צערא אגרא.

According to the suffering is the reward.

Rabbeinu Yonah – no pain no gain. The reward for studying Torah is commensurate with the effort expended.

Rambam – Commentary on the Mishnah – in the study of Torah the success is according to the suffering.

Rambam – one who craves and desires evil activities, but refrains, is more praiseworthy than he who never felt torment to do wrong.

R' S.R. Hirsch – It is not the quantity of your accomplishments but the degree of sacrifice needed to achieve them.

Or HaChaim Gen 3:1 - the more bitter the struggle the sweeter the fruits of victory.