
פרקי אבות

Pirkey Avoth



The Pirkey Avoth
(Chapters of the Fathers)

The Pirkey Avoth
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Introduction

The Pirkey Avoth – "Sayings of the Fathers," is a tractate of the Mishnah. The Mishnah is a compilation of rabbinical teachings assembled between 200 B.C.E. and 200 C.E. Along with the Gemara's, which are largely a later commentary on the Mishnah itself, the Mishnah is the foundation and basis of the Talmud.

"Sayings of the Fathers" is not an exact translation of the name Pirkey Avoth. "Pirkey" is a form of the word Perek – which means a portion or chapter of some writing. Therefore, a better translation of the title of this tractate of the Mishna would be, "Chapters of the Fathers." Another name used in antiquity for this particular tractate was "Mishnath Chassidym" – the Mishnah of the Pious, or Merciful Ones.

The Pirkey Avoth is a compendium of proverbs, parables, and moral folk aphorisms from the wisest and best loved teachers of Orthodox Judaism, beginning in the Babylonian exile and extending into the 3rd century of the common era. It is based in scripture and teaches some of its loftiest ideals. It is intended to instruct and influence those who aspire to Judaism's greatest heights, yet is still accessible to the commonest of men.

Traditionally, one chapter of the Pirkey Avoth is read on each Shabbath between Pesach and Yom Teruah in Jewish synagogues. An alternative practice is to read through the entire tractate during the count of the Omer, between Pesach and Shavuoth – Passover and Pentecost. Each of its maxims is studied, teacher with students and parent with child, in order to impart a level of ancient Hebrew ethics and morality to the next generation. Its purpose is not so much to teach the Torah and Prophets, but rather to teach about them, and how to approach them in understanding.

Many non-Jews and some non-orthodox Jews tend to trivialize or even oppose any part of the Talmud on principle alone, or because it is merely tradition. This is error. While many portions of it are incompatible with all but the most orthodox and stringent of rabbinical teachings, other portions – such as Avoth – are universally

wonderful and wise teachings by some of the best Hebrew teachers of the ages. Some tractates of the Mishnah have preserved knowledge and practices of essential Judaism dating to the times of King David, and others are the only source of knowledge and history we now have of the genesis of Temple worship and the halakha of those times. The Pirkey Avoth is one of those. It is largely non-sectarian and its precepts remain valid for Torah observant believers in any age. If anyone studies it diligently and puts its teachings into practice, despite their personal beliefs and doctrines, they cannot help but prosper in their faith and in their very humanity.

May you benefit and be blessed by this book in that way.

B'Shalom,
Sabbath Keepers Fellowship

All Yisrael have a portion in the World to Come...

CHAPTER ONE

All Yisrael have a portion in the world to come; as it is said, all Thy people shall be all righteous; they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, that I may be esteemed.

1. Moshe received the Torah on Sinai and handed it down to Y'hoshua; Y'hoshua to the elders; the elders to the prophets; and the prophets handed it down to the Men of the Great Assembly. They said three things: be deliberate in judgment; raise up many disciples; and make a fence round the Torah.

2. Shim'on the Righteous was one of the last survivors of the Great Assembly. He used to say, upon three things the world is based: upon the Torah, upon Divine service, and upon the practice of charity.

3. Antig'nos of Sokho received the tradition from Shim'on the Righteous. He used to say, be not like servants who minister to their master upon the condition of receiving a reward; but be like servants who minister to their master without the condition of receiving a reward; and let the fear of Heaven be upon you.

4. Yosey ben-Yohzehr of Tz'reydah and Yosey ben Yochanan of Yerushalayim received the tradition from the preceding. Yosey ben-Yohzehr of Tz'reydah, said, let thy house be a meeting house for the wise; sit amidst the dust of their feet; and drink in their words with thirst.

5. Yosey ben Yochanan of Yerushalayim, said, let thy house be open wide; let the poor be members of thy household; and engage not in much gossip with women. This applies even to one's own wife; how much more then to the wife of one's neighbor. Hence the sages say, whoever engages in much gossip with women brings evil upon himself, neglects the study of the Torah, and will in the end inherit Gehinnom.

6. Y'hoshua ben P'rachyah and Nittay, the Ar'beliy received the tradition from the preceding. Y'hoshua ben P'rachyah said, provide thyself a teacher; get thee a companion; and judge all men charitably.

7. Nittay the Ar'beliy said, keep thee far from a bad neighbor; associate not with the wicked; and abandon not the belief in retribution.

8. Y'hudah ben Tabbai and Shim'on ben Shatach received the tradition from the preceding. Y'hudah ben Tabbai said, act not the counsel's part; when the parties to a suit are standing before thee, let them both be regarded by thee as wicked; but when they are departed from thy presence, regard them both as innocent; the verdict having been acquiesced in by them.

9. Shim'on ben Shatach said, be very searching in the examination of witnesses, and be heedful of thy words, lest through them they learn to falsify.

10. Sh'mayah and Avtal'yon received the tradition from the preceding. Sh'mayah said, love work; hate mastership; and seek no intimacy with the ruling power.

11. Avtal'yon said, ye sages, be heedful of your words, lest ye incur the penalty of exile and be exiled to a place of evil waters, and the disciples who come after you drink thereof and die, and the Heavenly Name be profaned.

12. Hillel and Shammai received the tradition from the preceding. Hillel said, be of the disciples of Aharon, loving peace and pursuing peace, loving thy fellow-creatures, and drawing them near to the Torah.

13. He used to say, a name made great is a name destroyed; he who does not increase his knowledge decreases it; and he who does not study deserves to die; and he who makes a worldly use of the crown (of the Torah) shall pass away.

14. He used to say, if I am not for myself, who will be for me? And if I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?

15. Shammai said, fix a period for thy study of the Torah; say little and do much; and receive all men with a cheerful countenance.

16. Rabban Gam'liel said, provide thyself a teacher; be quit of doubt; and accustom not thyself to give tithes by a conjectural estimate.

17. Shim'on his son said, all my days I have grown up among the wise and I have found nought of better service than silence; not learning but doing is the chief thing; and whoso is profuse of words causes sin.

18. Rabban Shim'on ben Gam'liel said, by three things is the world preserved: by truth, by judgment, and by peace; as it is said, judge ye the truth, and the judgment of peace in your gates.

Rabbi Chanan'ya ben Aqash'ya said, Haqadosh, blessed be He, was pleased to make Yisrael worthy; wherefore He gave them a copious Torah and many commandments; as it is said, it pleased YHWH for His righteousness' sake to magnify the Torah and make it honorable.

CHAPTER TWO

All Yisrael have a portion in the world to come; as it is said, all Thy people shall be all righteous; they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, that I may be esteemed.

1. Rabbi said, which is the right way that a man should choose for himself? That which is splendorous to him who does it, and which also brings him beauty from mankind. Be heedful of a light mitzvah as of a grave one, for thou knowest not the grant of reward for each mitzvah. Reckon the loss incurred by the fulfilment of a mitzvah against the reward secured by its observance, and the gain gotten by a transgression against the loss it involves. Reflect upon three things, and thou wilt not come within the power of sin: Know what is above thee—a Seeing Eye, and a Hearing Ear, and all thy deeds written in a Book.

2. Rabban Gam'liel ben Rabbi Y'hudah Hanassi said, an excellent thing is the study of the Torah combined with some worldly occupation, for the labor demanded by them both makes sin to be forgotten. All study of the Torah without work, must in the end be futile and become the cause of sin. Let all who are employed with the congregation act with them for the sake of Heaven, for then the merit of their fathers sustains them, and their righteousness endures forever. And as for you, (Adonai will then say,) I account you worthy of great reward, as if you had wrought it all yourselves.

3. Be ye guarded in your relations with the ruling power; for they who exercise it draw no man near to them except for their own interests; appearing as friends when it is to their own advantage, they stand not by a man in the hour of his need.

4. He used to say, do His will as if it were thy will, that He may do thy will as if it were His will. Nullify thy will before His will, that He may nullify the will of others before thy will.

5. Hillel said, separate not thyself from the congregation; trust not in thyself until the day of thy death; judge not thy fellow-man until thou art come into his place; and say not anything which cannot be understood at once, in the hope that it will be understood in the end; neither say, When I have leisure I will study, perchance thou wilt have no leisure.

6. He used to say, an empty-headed man cannot be a sin-fearing man, nor can an ignorant person be truly pious, nor can the diffident learn, nor the passionate teach, nor is everyone who excels in business wise. In a place where there are no men, strive to be a man.

7. Moreover, he saw a skull floating on the surface of the water; he said to it, because thou drownedst others, they have drowned thee; and, at the last, they that drowned thee shall themselves be drowned.

8. He used to say, the more flesh, the more worms; the more property, the more anxiety; the more wives, the more witchcraft; the more maid-servants, the more lewdness; the more men-servants, the more robbery; the more Torah, the more life; the more schooling, the more wisdom; the more counsel, the more understanding; the more charity, the more peace. He who has acquired for himself words of Torah, has acquired for himself life in the world to come.

9. Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai received the tradition from Hillel and Shammai. He used to say, if thou hast learnt much Torah, ascribe not any merit to thyself, for thereunto wast thou created.

10. Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai had five disciples, and these are they: Rabbi Eliezer ben Horq'nos, Rabbi Y'hoshua ben Chanan'ya, Rabbi Yosey Hakoheyn, Rabbi Shim'on ben N'thaniel, and Rabbi Elazar ben Arak.

11. He used thus to recount their praise: Eliezer ben Horq'nos, is a cemented cistern, which loses not a drop; Y'hoshua ben Chanan'ya, happy is she that bare him; Yosey Hakoheyn is a

pious man; Shim'on ben N'thaniel is a fearer of sin; Elazar ben Arak is like a spring flowing with ever-sustained vigour.

12. He used to say, if all the sages of Yisrael were in one scale of the balance, and Eliezer ben Horq'nos in the other, he would outweigh them all. Abba Shaul said in his name, if all the sages of Yisrael, together with Eliezer ben Horq'nos were in one scale of the balance, and Elazar ben Arak in the other scale, he would outweigh them all.

13. He said to them, go forth and see which is the excellent way to which a man should cleave. Rabbi Eliezer said, an excellent eye; Rabbi Y'hoshua said, an excellent friend; Rabbi Yosey said, an excellent neighbor; Rabbi Shim'on said, one who foresees the fruit of an action; Rabbi Elazar said, an excellent heart. Thereupon he said to them, I approve the words of Elazar ben Arak rather than your words, for in his words yours are included.

14. He said to them, go forth and see which is the evil way that a man should shun. Rabbi Eliezer said, an evil eye; Rabbi Y'hoshua said, a bad friend; Rabbi Yosey said, a bad neighbor; Rabbi Shim'on said, one who borrows and does not repay. (He that borrows from man is the same as if he borrowed from the Temple; as it is said, the wicked borroweth, and payeth not again, but the righteous dealeth graciously and giveth); Rabbi Elazar said, a bad heart. Thereupon he said to them, I approve the words of Elazar ben Arak, rather than your words, for in his words yours are included.

15. They each said three things. Rabbi Eliezer said, let the honor of thy fellow-man be as dear to thee as thine own; be not easily moved to anger; and repent one day before thy death. And (he further said), warm thyself by the fire of the wise; but beware of their glowing coals, lest thou be burnt; for their bite is the bite of the fox, and their sting is the scorpion's sting, and their hiss is the serpent's hiss, and all their words are like coals of fire.

16. Rabbi Y'hoshua said, the evil eye, the evil inclination, and hatred of his fellow-creatures drive a man out of the world.

17. Rabbi Yosey said, let the property of thy fellow-man be as dear to thee as thine own; qualify thyself for the study of the Torah, since the knowledge of it is not an inheritance of thine; and let all thy deeds be done for the sake of Heaven.

18. Rabbi Shim'on said, be careful to read the Sh'ma, and to say the Amidah; and when thou prayest, regard not thy prayer as a fixed mechanical task, but as an appeal for mercy and grace before the Temple (as it is said, for He is gracious and full of mercy, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness, and relenteth Him of the evil); and be not wicked in thine own esteem.

19. Rabbi Elazar said, be eager to learn Torah; know what answer to give to the unbeliever; know also before Whom thou toilest, and who thy Employer is, who will pay thee the reward of thy labor.

20. Rabbi Tar'fon said, the day is short, and the work is great, and the laborers are sluggish, and the reward is much, and the Master is urgent.

21. He used also to say, it is not thy duty to complete the work, but neither art thou free to desist from it; if thou hast studied much Torah, much reward will be given thee, for faithful is thy Employer to pay thee the reward of thy labor; and know that the grant of reward unto the righteous will be in the time to come.

Rabbi Chanan'ya ben Aqash'ya said, Haqadosh, blessed be He, was pleased to make Yisrael worthy; wherefore He gave them a copious Torah and many commandments; as it is said, it pleased YHWH for His righteousness' sake to magnify the Torah and make it honorable.

CHAPTER THREE

All Yisrael have a portion in the world to come; as it is said, all thy people shall be all righteous; they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, that I may be esteemed.

1. Akav'ya ben Mahalal'el said, reflect upon three things, and thou wilt not come within the power of sin: know whence thou camest, whither thou art going; and before Whom thou wilt in future have to give account and reckoning. Whence thou camest - from a putrid drop; whither thou art going - to a place of dust, worms and maggots; and before Whom thou wilt in future have to give account and reckoning - before the Supreme King of kings, Haqadosh, blessed be He.

2. Rabbi Chanina S'gan Hakohanyim said, pray for the welfare of the government, since but for the fear thereof men would swallow each other alive.

3. Rabbi Chanan'ya ben T'radyon said, if two sit together and interchange no words of Torah, they are a meeting of scoffers, concerning whom it is said, the righteous man sitteth not in the seat of the scoffers; but if two sit together and interchange words of Torah, the Shekinah abides between them; as it is said, then they that feared YHWH spake one with the other, and YHWH hearkened and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before Him, for them that feared YHWH, and that thought upon His Name. Now, the Scripture enables me to draw this inference in respect to two persons; whence can it be deduced that if even one person sedulously occupies himself with the Torah, Haqadosh, blessed be He, appoints unto him a reward? Because it is said, though he sit alone, and meditate in stillness, yet he taketh it (the reward) upon him.

4. Rabbi Shim'on said, if three have eaten at a table and have spoken there no words of Torah, it is as if they had eaten of sacrifices to dead idols, of whom it is said, for all their tables are full of vomit and filthiness; the Temple is not (in their thoughts). But if three have

eaten at a table and have spoken there words of Torah, it is as if they had eaten at the table of the Temple; to which the Scripture may be applied, and he said unto me, this is the table that is before YHWH.

5. Rabbi Chanina ben Chakinay said, he who keeps awake at night, and goes on his way alone, and turns his heart to idle thoughts, such a one sins against himself.

6. Rabbi N'chun'ya ben Haqanah said, whoso receives upon himself the yoke of the Torah, from him the yoke of the kingdom and the yoke of worldly care will be removed; but whoso casts off from him the yoke of the Torah, upon him will be laid the yoke of the kingdom and the yoke of worldly care.

7. Rabbi Chalaf'ta ben Dosa of the village of Chanan'ya said, when ten people sit together and occupy themselves with the Torah, the Shekinah abides among them; as it is said, Elohyim standeth in the congregation of the righteous. And whence can it be shown that the same applies to five? Because it is said, He hath founded his band upon the earth. And whence can it be shown that the same applies to three? Because it is said, He judgeth among the judges. And whence can it be shown that the same applies to two? Because it is said, then they that feared YHWH spake one with the other, and YHWH hearkened, and heard. And whence can it be shown that the same applies even to one? Because it is said, in every place where I cause my Name to be remembered, I will come unto thee and I will bless thee.

8. Rabbi Elazar of Beyr'totha said, give unto Him of what is His, seeing that thou and what thou hast are His. This is also found expressed by David who said, for all things come of Thee, and of Thine own we have given Thee.

9. Rabbi Ya'aqov said, he who is walking by the way and rehearses what he has learnt, and breaks off from his rehearsing and says, how fine is that tree, how fine is that field, him the scripture regards as if he were guilty against himself.

10. Rabbi Dos'tay bar Yannay said in the name of Rabbi Me'iy, whoso forgets one word of his study, him the scripture regards as if he had forfeited his life; for it is said, only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen. Now, one might suppose that the same result follows even if a man's study has been too hard for him. To guard against such an inference it is said, and lest they depart from thy mouth all the days of thy life. Thus, a person's guilt is not established until he deliberately and of set purpose removes those lessons from his heart.

11. Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa said, he in whom the fear of sin comes before wisdom, his wisdom shall endure; but he in whom wisdom comes before the fear of sin, his wisdom will not endure.

12. He used to say, he whose deeds exceed his wisdom, his wisdom shall endure; but he whose wisdom exceeds his deeds, his wisdom will not endure.

13. He used to say, he in whom the spirit of his fellow creatures takes delight, in him the Spirit of the Temple takes delight; and he in whom the spirit of his fellow-creatures takes not delight, in him the Spirit of the Temple takes no delight.

14. Rabbi Dosa ben Horkinas said, morning sleep, and midday wine, and children's talk, and attending the meeting places of the ignorant, drive a man from the world.

15. Rabbi Elazar of Ha'muda'iy said, he who profanes things sacred, and despises the festivals, and puts his fellow-man to shame in public, and makes void the covenant of Av'raham our father, and makes the Torah bear a meaning other than the right; such a one, even though knowledge of the Torah and mitzvot be his, has no share in the world to come.

16. Rabbi Yish'mael said, be submissive to a superior, affable to a suppliant, and receive all men with cheerfulness.

17. Rabbi Aqiva said, jesting and levity lead a man on to lewdness; the Massorah is a fence to the Torah; tithes are a fence to riches; vows are a fence to abstinence; a fence to wisdom is silence.

18. He used to say, beloved is man, for he was created in the image of Adam; but it was by a special love that it was made known to him that he was created in the image of Elohyim; as it is said, for in the image of Elohyim made He man. Beloved are Yisrael, for they were called children of the Temple; but it was by a special love that it was made known to them that they were called children of The Temple; as it is said, ye are children unto YHWH your Elohyim. Beloved are Yisrael, for unto them was given the desirable instrument; but it was by a special love that it was made known to them that the desirable instrument was theirs, through which the world was created; as it is said, for I give you excellent doctrine; forsake ye not My Torah.

19. Everything is foreseen, yet freedom of choice is given; and the world is judged by grace, yet all is according to the amount of work.

20. He used to say, everything is given on pledge, and a net is spread for all living; the shop is open, and the dealer gives credit, and the ledger lies open, and the hand writes, and whosoever wishes to borrow may come and borrow; but the collectors regularly make their daily round and exact payment from man, whether he be content or not, and they have that whereon they can rely in their demand; and the judgment is a judgment of truth; and everything is prepared for the feast.

21. Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah said, where there is no Torah, there are no manners; where there are no manners, there is no Torah; where there is no fear of YHWH, there is no wisdom; where there is no knowledge, there is no understanding; where there is no meal, there is no Torah; where there is no Torah, there is no meal.

22. He used to say, he whose wisdom exceeds his deeds, to what is he like? To a tree whose branches are many, but whose roots are few, and the wind comes and plucks it up and overturns it upon its face; as it is said, and he shall be like a lonely juniper tree in the desert, and shall not see when

excellence cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, a salt land and not inhabited. But he whose deeds exceed his wisdom, to what is he like? To a tree whose branches are few, but whose roots are many, so that even if all the winds in the world come and blow upon it, it cannot be stirred from its place; as it is said, and he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out its roots by the river and shall not perceive when heat cometh; but his leaf shall be green, and shall not be troubled in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.

23. Rabbi Elazar Chisma said, the laws concerning the sacrifices of birds and the purification of women are ordinances of moment; astronomy and geometry are the after-courses of wisdom.

Rabbi Chanan'ya ben Aqash'ya said, Haqadosh, blessed be He, was pleased to make Yisrael worthy; wherefore He gave them a copious Torah and many commandments; as it is said, it pleased YHWH for His righteousness' sake to magnify the Torah and make it honorable.

CHAPTER FOUR

All Yisrael have a portion in the world to come; as it is said, all Thy people shall be all righteous; they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, that I may be esteemed.

1. Ben Zoma said, who is wise? He who learns from all men; as it is said, from all my teachers I have gotten understanding. Who is mighty? He who subdues his passions; as it is said, he that is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth over his spirit than he that taketh a city. Who is rich? He who rejoices in his portion; as it is said, when thou eatest the labor of thine hands, happy art thou, and it shall be well with thee: happy art thou in this world, and it shall be well with thee in the world to come. Who is worthy of honor? He who respects his fellow-men; as it is said, for them that honor Me I will honor, and they that despise Me shall be held in contempt.

2. Ben Azzay said, run to do even a slight precept, and flee from transgression; for one mitzvah draws another mitzvah in its train, and one sin, another sin; for the reward of a mitzvah is a mitzvah, and the wages of sin is sin.

3. He used to say, despise not any man, and carp not at any thing; for there is not a man that has not his hour, and there is not a thing that has not its place.

4. Rabbi Levitas of Yavneh said, be exceedingly lowly of spirit, since the hope of man is but the worm.

5. Rabbi Yochanan ben B'roqah said, whosoever profanes the Name of Heaven in secret, will suffer the penalty for it in public; and this, whether the Heavenly Name be profaned in ignorance or in willfulness.

6. Rabbi Yish'mael his son said, he who learns in order to teach is given the opportunity both to learn and to teach; but he who learns in

order to practice is given the opportunity to learn and to teach, to observe and to practice.

7. Rabbi Tzadoq said, separate not thyself from the congregation; (in the judge's office) act not the counsel's part; make not of the Torah a crown wherewith to aggrandize thyself, nor a spade wherewith to dig. So also used Hillel to say, he who makes a worldly use of the crown of the Torah shall pass away. Hence, thou mayest infer that whosoever derives a profit for himself from the words of the Torah is helping on his own destruction.

8. Rabbi Yosey said, whoso honors the Torah will himself be honored by mankind; but whoso dishonors the Torah will himself be dishonored by mankind.

9. Rabbi Yish'mael his son said, he who shuns the judicial office rids himself of hatred, robbery, and vain swearing; but he who presumptuously lays down decisions is foolish, wicked, and of an arrogant spirit.

10. He used to say, judge not alone, for none may judge alone save One; neither say (to thy judicial colleagues), accept my view, for the choice is theirs (to concur), and it is not for thee (to compel concurrence).

11. Rabbi Yonathan said, whoso fulfils the Torah in the midst of poverty, shall in the end fulfil it in the midst of wealth; and whoso neglects the Torah in the midst of wealth, shall in the end neglect it in the midst of poverty.

12. Rabbi Me'iyar said, lessen thy toil for worldly things, and be busy in the Torah; be humble of spirit before all men. If thou neglectest the Torah, many causes for neglecting it will present themselves to thee; but if thou laborest in the Torah, He has abundant recompense to give thee.

13. Rabbi Eliezer ben Ya'aqov said, he who does one excellent deed has gotten himself one advocate; and he who commits one

transgression has gotten himself one accuser. Repentance and deeds of charity are as a shield against punishment.

14. Rabbi Yochanan the sandal maker said, every assembly which is in the name of Heaven will in the end be established; but that which is not in the name of Heaven will not in the end be established.

15. Rabbi Elazar ben Shammua said, let the honor of thy disciple be as dear to thee as thine own, and the honor of thine associate be like the reverence for thy master, and the reverence for thy master like the fear of Heaven.

16. Rabbi Yehudah said, be cautious in teaching, for an error in teaching may amount to presumptuous sin.

17. Rabbi Shim'on said, there are three crowns: the crown of Torah, the crown of the Kehunnah, and the crown of the Kingdom; but the crown of an excellent name excels them all.

18. Rabbi N'horai said, wander forth to a home of the Torah, and say not that the Torah will come after Thee, for there thy associates will establish thee in the possession of it; and lean not upon thine own understanding.

19. Rabbi Yannai said, it is not in our power to explain either the prosperity of the wicked or the afflictions of the righteous.

20. Rabbi Mattithyah ben Cheres said, be beforehand in the salutation of peace to all men; and be rather a tail to lions than a head to foxes.

21. Rabbi Ya'aqov said, this world is like an ante-chamber to the world to come; prepare thyself in the ante-chamber, that thou mayest enter into the hall.

22. He used to say, better is one hour of repentance and excellent deeds in this world than the whole life of the world to come; yet better

is one hour of blissfulness of spirit in the world to come than the whole life of this world.

23. Rabbi Shim'on ben Elazar said, do not appease thy fellow in the hour of his anger; and comfort him not in the hour when his dead lies before him; and question him not in the hour of his vow; and strive not to see him in the hour of his disgrace.

24. Sh'muel Haqatan used to quote, rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth; lest YHWH see it and it displease Him, and He turn away His wrath from him [unto thee].

25. Elisha ben Avuyah said, if one learns as a child, what is it like? Like ink written on clean paper. If one learns as an old man, what is it like? Like ink written on blotted paper.

26. Rabbi Yosey ben Yehudah of K'phar Habav'ly said, he who learns from the young, to what is he like? To one who eats unripe grapes, or drinks wine from the vat. And he who learns from the old, to what is he like? To one who eats ripe grapes, or drinks old wine.

27. Rabbi Me'iyar said, look not at the flask, but at what it contains; there may be a new flask full of old wine, and an old flask that has not even new wine in it.

28. Rabbi Elazar Haqappar said, envy, desire and ambition drive a man out of the world.

29. He used to say, they that are born are destined to die. and the dead to be brought to life again, and the living to be judged; to know, to make known, and to be made conscious that He is El, He the Maker, He the Creator, He the Discerner, He the Judge, He the Witness, He the Complainant; He it is that will in future judge, blessed be He, with whom there is no unrighteousness, nor forgetfulness, nor respect of persons, nor taking of bribes. Know also that everything is according to the

reckoning; and let not thy imagination give thee hope that the grave will be a place of refuge for thee; for perforce thou wast formed, and perforce thou wast born, and thou livest perforce, and perforce thou wilt die, and perforce thou wilt in the future have to give account and reckoning before the Supreme King of kings, Haqadosh, blessed be He.

Rabbi Chanan'ya ben Aqash'ya said, Haqadosh, blessed be He, was pleased to make Yisrael worthy; wherefore He gave them a copious Torah and many commandments; as it is said, it pleased YHWH for His righteousness' sake to magnify the Torah and make it honorable.

CHAPTER FIVE

All Yisrael have a portion in the world to come; as it is said, all thy people shall be all righteous; they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, that I may be esteemed.

1. With ten sayings the world was created. What does this teach us? Could it not have been created with one saying? It is to make known the punishment that will befall the wicked who destroy the world that was created with ten sayings, as well as the excellent reward that will be bestowed upon the just who preserve the world that was created with ten sayings.

2. There were ten generations from Adam to Noach, to thus make known (that Elohyim is) slow to anger; the patience of YHWH, seeing that all those generations continued provoking Him until He brought upon them the waters of the flood.

3. There were ten generations from Noach to Av'raham, to thus make known (that Elohyim is) slow to anger; seeing that all those generations continued provoking Him, until Av'raham our father came and received the reward they should all have earned.

4. With ten trials, our father Av'raham was tried, and he stood firm in them all; to make known how great was the love of our father Av'raham.

5. Ten miracles were wrought for our fathers in Mitzrayim, and ten at the Sea.

6. Ten plagues did Haqadosh, blessed be He, bring upon the Mitzrym in Mitzrayim, and ten at the Sea.

7. With ten trials did our fathers try Haqadosh, blessed be He, in the wilderness; as it is said, and they have put Me to the proof these ten times, and have not hearkened to My voice.

8. Ten miracles were wrought for our fathers in the Temple: no woman miscarried from the scent of the qadosh flesh; the qadosh flesh never became putrid; no fly was seen in the slaughter house; no unclean accident ever befell the Koheyn Gadol on Yom Hakippurym; the rain never quenched the fire of the wood-pile on the altar; neither did the wind overcome the column of smoke that arose therefrom; nor was there ever found any disqualifying defect in the omer, or in the two loaves (on Shavuoth), or in the showbread; though the people stood closely pressed together, they found ample space to prostrate themselves; never did serpent or scorpion injure anyone in Yerushalayim; nor did any man ever say to his fellow, the place is too narrow for me to lodge over night in Yerushalayim.

9. Ten things were created on the eve of Shabbath in the twilight: the mouth of the earth; the mouth of the well; the mouth of the ass; the rainbow; the manna; the rod of Moshe; the Shamir; the writing on the tables; the instrument of writing; and the tables of stone. Some say, the destroying spirits also, and the sepulchre of Moshe, and the ram of Av'raham our father; and others say, tongs also made with tongs.

10. There are seven marks of an uncultured, and seven of a wise man: the wise man does not speak before him who is greater than he in wisdom, and does not break in upon the speech of his fellow; he is not hasty to answer; he questions according to the subject matter, and answers to the point; he speaks upon the first thing first, and the last last; regarding that which he has not understood he says, I do not understand it; and he acknowledges the truth. The reverse of all this is to be found in an uncultured man.

11. Seven kinds of punishment come into the world for seven important transgressions: if some give their tithes and others do not, a dearth ensues from drought, and some suffer hunger, while others are full. If they all determine to give no tithes, a dearth ensues from tumult and drought. If they resolve not to give the challah bread, an exterminating dearth ensues. Pestilence comes into the world to fulfil those death penalties threatened in the Torah, the execution of which, however, is not within the function of a human tribunal, and for the

violation of the law regarding the fruits of the seventh year. The sword comes into the world for the delay of justice, and for the perversion of justice, and on account of the offence of those who interpret the Torah not according to its true sense. Wild beasts come into the world for perjury, and for the profanation of the Divine Name. Captivity comes into the world on account of idolatry, immorality, bloodshed, and the neglect of the year of rest for the soil.

12. At four periods pestilence grows apace: in the fourth year, in the seventh, at the conclusion of the seventh year, and at the conclusion of The Feast in each year: in the fourth year, for default of giving the tithe to the poor in the third year; in the seventh year, for default of giving the tithe to the poor in the sixth year; at the conclusion of the seventh year, for the violation of the law regarding the fruits of the seventh year; and at the conclusion of The Feast in each year, for robbing the poor of the grants legally assigned to them.

13. There are four characters among men: he who says, what is mine is mine and what is thine is thine, his is a neutral character (some say, this is a character like that of Sodom); he who says, what is mine is thine and what is thine is mine, is a boor; he who says, what is mine is thine and what is thine is thine, is a saint; he who says, what is thine is mine and what is mine is mine, is a wicked man.

14. There are four kinds of tempers: he whom it is easy to provoke and easy to pacify, his loss disappears in his gain; he whom it is hard to provoke and hard to pacify, his gain disappears in his loss; he whom it is hard to provoke and easy to pacify is a saint; he whom it is easy to provoke and hard to pacify, is a wicked man.

15. There are four qualities in disciples: he who quickly understands and quickly forgets, his gain disappears in his loss; he who understands with difficulty and forgets with difficulty, his loss disappears in his gain; he who understands quickly and forgets with difficulty, his is an excellent portion; he who understands with difficulty and forgets quickly, his is an evil portion.

16. As to almsgiving there are four dispositions: he who desires to give, but that others should not give, his eye is evil towards what appertains to others; he who desires that others should give, but will not give himself, his eye is evil against what is his own; he who gives and wishes others to give, is a saint; he who will not give and does not wish others to give, is a wicked man.

17. There are four characters suggested by those who attend the house of study: he who goes and does not practice, secures the reward for going; he who practices but does not go, secures the reward for practicing; he who goes and practices, is a saint; he who neither goes nor practices, is a wicked man.

18. There are four qualities among those that sit before the wise: they are like a sponge, a funnel, a strainer, or a sieve: a sponge, which sucks up everything; a funnel, which lets in at one end and out at the other; a strainer, which lets the wine pass out and retains the lees; a sieve, which lets out the bran and retains the fine flour.

19. Whenever love depends upon some material cause, with the passing away of that cause, the love too passes away; but if it be not dependent upon such a cause, it will not pass away forever. Which love was that which depended upon a material cause? Such was the love of Amnon and Tamar. And that which depended upon no such cause? Such was the love of David and Jonathan.

20. Every controversy that is in the name of Heaven shall in the end lead to a permanent result; but every controversy that is not in the name of Heaven shall not lead to a permanent result. Which controversy was that which was in the name of Heaven? Such was the controversy of Hillel and Shammai. And that which was not in the name of Heaven? Such was the controversy of Qorach and all his company.

21. Whosoever causes many to be righteous, through him no sin shall be brought about; but he who causes many to sin, shall not have the means to repent. Moshe was righteous and made many righteous; the righteousness of the many was laid upon him; as it is said, He

executed the justice of YHWH, and His judgments with Yisrael. Yarb'am ben N'bat sinned and caused many to sin; the sin of the many was laid upon him; as it is said, for the sins of Yarb'am which he sinned, and wherewith he made Yisrael to sin.

22. Whosoever has these three attributes is of the disciples of Av'raham our father; but whosoever has three other attributes is of the disciples of Bila'am the wicked: An excellent eye, a humble mind and a lowly spirit (are the tokens) of the disciples of Av'raham our father; an evil eye, a haughty mind and a proud spirit (are the signs) of the disciples of Bila'am the wicked. What is the difference between the disciples of Av'raham our father and those of Bila'am the wicked? The disciples of Av'raham our father enjoy this world and inherit the world to come; as it is said, that I may cause those that love Me to inherit substance, and may fill all their treasures. The disciples of Bila'am the wicked inherit Gehinnom and descend into the pit of destruction; as it is said, but thou, O Elohyim, wilt bring them down into the pit of destruction; blood-thirsty and deceitful men shall not live out half their days; but I will trust in Thee.

23. Yehudah ben Teyma said, be strong as a leopard, light as an eagle, fleet as a hart, and strong as a lion, to do the will of thy Father who is in heaven. He used to say, the bold-faced are for Gehinnom, the shame-faced for the Garden of Eden. (He said further) May it be thy will, O YHWH, our Elohyim and Elohyim of our fathers, that the Temple be speedily rebuilt in our days, and grant our portion in thy Torah.

24. He used to say, at five years the age is reached for the study of the scripture, at ten for the study of the Mishna, at thirteen for the fulfillment of the commandments, at fifteen for the study of the Talmud, at eighteen for marriage, at twenty for seeking a livelihood, at thirty for entering into one's full strength, at forty for understanding, at fifty for counsel, at sixty a man attains old age, at seventy the hoary head, at eighty the gift of special strength, at ninety he bends beneath the weight of years, at a hundred he is as if he were already dead and had passed away from the world.

25. Ben Bag Bag said, turn it (the Torah), and turn it over again; for everything is in it; and contemplate it, and wax grey and old over it, and stir not from it, for thou canst have no better rule than this.

26. Ben Hai Hai said, according to the labor is the reward.

Rabbi Chanan'ya ben Aqash'ya said, Haqadosh, blessed be He, was pleased to make Yisrael worthy; wherefore He gave them a copious Torah and many commandments; as it is said, it pleased YHWH for His righteousness' sake to magnify the Torah and make it honorable.

CHAPTER SIX

All Yisrael have a portion in the world to come; as it is said, all thy people shall be all righteous; they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, that I may be esteemed.

The sages taught the following in the style of the Mishna,—blessed be He that made choice of them and their Mishna:

1. Rabbi Me'iyar said, whosoever labors in the Torah for its own sake, merits many things; and not only so, but the whole world is indebted to him: he is called friend, beloved, a lover of the Temple, a lover of mankind; it clothes him in meekness and reverence; it fits him to become just, pious, upright and faithful; it keeps him far from sin, and brings him near to virtue; through him the world enjoys counsel and sound knowledge, understanding and strength (as it is said, counsel is Mine, and sound knowledge; I am understanding; I have strength); and it gives him sovereignty and dominion and discerning judgment. To him the secrets of the Torah are revealed; he is made like a never-failing fountain, and like a river that flows on with ever-sustained vigour; he becomes modest, patient, and forgiving of insults; and it magnifies and exalts him above all things.

2. Rabbi Y'hoshua ben Levy said, every day a Bath-Qol goes forth from Mount Sinai proclaiming these words: woe to mankind for contempt of the Torah, for whoever does not labor in the Torah is said to be under the divine censure; as it is said, as a ring of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman who turneth aside from discretion. And it says, and the tables were the work of Elohyim, and the writing was the writing of Elohyim, graven upon the tables. Read not *charuth* (graven), but *cheruth* (freedom); for no man is free but he who labors in the Torah. But, whosoever labors in the Torah, behold he shall be exalted; as it is said, and from Mattanah to Nachliel, and from Nachliel to Bamoth.

3. He who learns from his fellow a single chapter, a single rule, a single verse, a single expression, or even a single letter, ought to pay him honor; for so we find with David, King of Yisrael, who learnt only two things from Achithophel, and yet regarded him as his master, his guide and his familiar friend; as it is said, but it was thou, a man, mine equal, my guide, and my familiar friend. Now, is it not an argument from minor to major? If David, the King of Yisrael, who learned only two things from Achithophel, regarded him as his master, guide and familiar friend, how much more ought one who learns from his fellow a chapter, rule, verse, expression, or even a single letter, to pay him honor? And honor is nothing but Torah; as it is said, the wise shall inherit honor, and the perfect shall inherit excellence. And excellence is nothing but Torah; as it is said, for I give you excellent doctrine, forsake ye not My Torah.

4. This is the way that is becoming for the study of the Torah: a morsel of bread with salt thou must eat, and water by measure thou must drink; thou must sleep upon the ground, and live a life of trouble while thou toilest in the Torah. If thou doest thus, happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee; happy shalt thou be in this world, and it shall be well with thee in the world to come.

5. Seek not greatness for thyself, and court not honor; let thy deeds exceed thy learning, and crave not after the table of kings; for thy table is greater than theirs, and thy crown is greater than theirs, and thy employer is faithful to pay thee the reward of thy work.

6. The Torah is greater than the Kehunnah and the Kingdom, seeing that the Kingdom demands thirty qualifications, the Kehunnah twenty-four, while the Torah is acquired by forty-eight. And these are they: by audible study; by distinct pronunciation; by understanding and discernment of the heart; by awe, reverence, meekness, cheerfulness; by ministering to the sages; by attaching oneself to colleagues; by discussion with pupils; by sedateness; by knowledge of the Scripture and of the Mishna; by moderation in business; in intercourse with the world; in pleasure; in sleep; in conversation; in laughter; by patience; by an excellent heart; by faith in the wise; by resignation under affliction; by recognizing one's place; rejoicing in

one's portion; putting a fence to one's words; claiming no merit for oneself; by being beloved; loving the Temple; loving mankind; loving just courses; rectitude and reproof; by keeping oneself far from honor; not boasting of one's learning; nor delighting in giving decisions; by bearing the yoke with one's fellow; judging him favorably and leading him to truth and peace; by being composed in one's study; by asking and answering; hearing and adding thereto; by learning with the object of teaching; by learning with the object of practicing; by making one's master wiser; fixing attention upon his discourse, and reporting a thing in the name of him who said it. So thou hast learnt, whosoever reports a thing in the name of him that said it brings deliverance into the world; as it is said, and Esther told the king in the name of Mardak.

7. Great is the Torah which gives life to those that practice it in this world and in the world to come; as it is said, for they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh; and it says, it shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones; and it says, it is a tree of life to them that grasp it, and of them that uphold it every one is rendered happy; and it says, for they shall be a chaplet of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck; and it says, it shall give to thine head a chaplet of grace, a crown of esteem it shall deliver to thee; and it says, for by me thy days shall be multiplied, and the years of thy life shall be increased; and it says, length of days is in its right hand, in its left hand are riches and honor; and it says, for length of days and years of life, and peace shall they add to thee.

8. Rabbi Shim'on ben Yehudah in the name of Rabbi Shim'on ben Yochay said, beauty, strength, riches, honor, wisdom, (old age) a hoary head, and children, are comely to the righteous and comely to the world; as it is said, the hoary head is a crown of esteem if it be found in the way of righteousness; and it says, the esteem of young men is their strength, and the adornment of old men is the hoary head; and it says, a crown unto the wise is their riches; and it says, children's children are the crown of old men, and the adornment of children are their fathers; and it is said, then the moon shall be confounded and the sun ashamed, for YHWH of Hosts shall reign in

Mount Tziyon and in Yerushalayim, and before his elders shall be esteem.

Rabbi Shim'on ben M'nasya said, these seven qualifications which the sages enumerated as becoming to the righteous were all realized in Rabbi Hanassi, and in his sons.

9. Rabbi Yosey ben Qis'ma said, I was once walking by the way when a man met me and greeted me, and I returned his greeting. He said to me, Rabbi, from what place art thou? I said to him, I come from a great city of sages and scribes. He said to me, if thou art willing to dwell with us in our place, I will give thee a thousand thousand golden dinars and precious stones and pearls. I said to him, wert thou to give me all the silver and gold and precious stones and pearls in the world, I would not dwell anywhere but in a home of the Torah; and thus it is written in the book of Tehillym by the hands of David, King of Yisrael, The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver; and not only so, but in the hour of man's departure neither silver nor gold nor precious stones nor pearls accompany him, but only Torah and excellent works; as it is said, when thou walkest it shall lead thee, when thou liest down it shall watch over thee, and when thou awakest it shall talk with thee, when thou walkest it shall lead thee in this world, when thou liest down it shall watch over thee in the grave, and when thou awakest it shall talk with thee in the world to come. And it says, the silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine, saith YHWH of Hosts.

10. Five possessions Haqadosh, blessed be He, made especially His own in His world, and these are they: the Torah, heaven and earth, Av'raham, Yisrael, and the Temple. Whence know we this of the Torah? Because it is written, YHWH possessed me as the beginning of His way, before His works, from of old. Whence of heaven and earth? Because it is written, thus saith YHWH, the heaven is My throne, and the earth is My foot-stool; what manner of house will ye build unto Me? And what manner of place for My rest? And it says, how manifold are Thy works, O YHWH! In wisdom hast Thou made them all; the earth is full of Thy possessions. Whence of Av'raham? Because it is written, and He blessed him, and said, blessed be Av'ram of El Elyon, Master of heaven and earth. Whence of Yisrael?

Because it is written, till Thy people pass over, O YHWH, till the people pass over which Thou hast acquired; and it says, as for the Qedoshym that are in the earth, they are the noble ones in whom is all My delight. Whence of the Temple? Because it is written, the place, O YHWH, which Thou hast made for Thee to dwell in, the sanctuary, O YHWH, which Thy hands have prepared; and it says, and He brought them to the border of His sanctuary, to this mountain which His might had acquired.

11. Whatsoever Haqadosh, blessed be He, created in His world He created but for His esteem; as it is said, everything that is called by My Name, it is for My esteem; I have created it, I have formed it, yea, I have made it; and it says, YHWH shall reign forever and ever.

Rabbi Chanan'ya ben Aqash'ya said, Haqadosh, blessed be He, was pleased to make Yisrael worthy; wherefore He gave them a copious Torah and many commandments; as it is said, it pleased YHWH for His righteousness' sake to magnify the Torah and make it honorable.

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