



TRACTATE AVOT
CHAPTER TWO
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MISHNA 1

Rabbi says:

- Which is the straight path that a man should choose for himself? All that is an honor to him who pursues it and is an honor before mankind.
- And be as cautious with a light precept as with a grave one, since you know not the recompense given for precepts.
- And reckon the loss of a precept against its recompense, and the recompense of a transgression against its loss.
- Reflect upon three things, and you will not come into the hand of transgression. Know what is above you: a seeing eye, and a hearing ear, and all of your deeds are written in a book.

MISHNA 2

Rabban Gamaliel, the son of Rabbi Judah, the Prince, says:

- Well-joined is the study of Torah with some worldly occupation, for the toil demanded by them both makes sin forgotten.
- And all Torah(-study) which has not work in it, ends in neglect and leads to sin.
- And all who labor with the congregation, let them labor with them for the Name of Heaven, for the merit of their fathers assists them, and their righteousness stands forever.
- And as for you, "I account you worthy of great reward, as if you had wrought it all yourselves."

MISHNA 3

Be cautious with the ruling authority,

- for they let no man approach them but for their own needs,
- appearing as friends in the hour of their own benefit,
- and they do not stand by a man in the hour of his distress.

MISHNA 4A

He would say:

- Do His will as if it were your will, so that He may do your will as if it were His will.
- Nullify your will before His will, so that He may nullify the will of others before your will.

MISHNA 4B

Hillel says:

- Separate not from the congregation,
- and trust not yourself until the day of your death,
- and judge not your comrade until you reach his place,
- and say not of a thing which cannot be heard that its end is to be heard,
- and say not, "when I have leisure I will study," perchance you may not have leisure.

MISHNA 5

He would say:

- No boor is a fearer of sin;
- and the vulgar is not pious;
- and the timid does not learn;
- and the hot-tempered does not teach;
- and not everyone that trades much, wizens;
- (and) in a place without men, strive to be a man.

MISHNA 6

Moreover, he saw a skull floating on the face of the water,

(and) he said (to it):

- "On account of drowning others, they drowned you.
- In the end, those who drowned you shall be drowned."

MISHNA 7

He would say,

- More flesh – more worms;
- more possessions – more contention;
- more women – more witchcraft;
- more maidservants – more lewdness;
- more slaves – more theft;
- more Torah – more life;
- More study – more wisdom;
- More counsel – more understanding
- More charity – more peace.
- He who has acquired a good name, has acquired {it} for himself,
- and he who has acquired words of Torah, has acquired life of the world to come.

MISHNA 8

Rabban Johanan ben Zakkai received [the Torah] from Hillel and from Shammai.

He would say:

- If you learned much Torah,
- take no credit for yourself
- because for this (purpose) were you created.

Five disciples were there to R. Johanan ben Zakkai and these are they: Eliezer ben Hyrcanus, R. Joshua ben Hananiah, R. Joseph (ha-Kohen), and R. Simeon ben Nethanel, R. Eleazar ben Arakh.

He used to recount their praise:

- R. Eliezer ben Hyrcanus – a plastered cistern which loses not a drop.
- R. Joshua ben Hananiah – happy is she who bore him.
- R. Joseph ha-Kohen – pious man.
- R. Simeon ben Nethanel – fearer of sin.
- And R. Eleazar ben Arakh – a full flowing spring.

He would say:

- If all the sages of Israel were in one scale of the balance, and Eliezer ben Hyrcanus in the second scale, he would outweigh them all.

Abba Saul said in his name:

- If all the sages of Israel were in one scale of the balance and Eliezer ben Hyrcanus with them, and Eleazar ben Arakh in the second scale, he would outweigh them all.

MISHNA 9

He said to them: Go forth and see which is the good path to which a man should cleave.

R. Eliezer said: A good eye.

- R. Joshua said: A good comrade.
- R. Jose said: A good neighbor.
- R. Simeon said: One who sees what will be.
- R. Eleazar said: A good heart.
- He said to them: I approve the words of Eleazar ben Arakh over your words, for included in his words are your words.

MISHNA 10

They (each) said three things.

R. Eliezer says:

- Let the honor of your comrade be dear to you like your own (soul);
- and be not quick to anger;
- and repent one day before your death.

And warm yourself by the fire of the sages, but be cautious of their coal so that you will not be burned, for their bite is the bite of a fox, and their sting the sting of a scorpion, and their hiss the hiss of a serpent, and all their words are like coals of fire.

MISHNA 11

R. Joshua says:

- An eye of evil,

- and an inclination of evil,
- and hatred of human beings expel a man from the world.

MISHNA 12

R. Jose says:

- Let the property of your comrade be dear to you like your own;
- and prepare yourself to study Torah for it is not an inheritance (for you);
- and let all your deeds be for the name of Heaven.

MISHNA 13

R. Simeon says:

- Be cautious in the reading of Shema,
- and when you pray, make not your prayer regular but supplication before God blessed is He, as it is said: “for He is gracious and compassionate, long-suffering, abounding in kindness (Joel 2:13);
- and be not wicked before yourself.

MISHNA 14

R. Eleazar says:

- Be diligent to study
- (and know) what to respond to an Epicurean;
- and know before whom you labor and who is the master of your work.
- and know before whom you labor. And faithful is the master of your work to pay you the recompense for your action.

MISHNA 15

R. Tarphon says:

- The day is short,
- and the work is great,
- and the laborers are sluggish,
- and the recompense is great,
- and the master of the house is urging.

MISHNA 16

He would say:

- It is not up to you to finish the work, but you are not free to desist from it.
- If you learned much Torah, they give you much recompense.
- Trustworthy is the master of your work to pay you the recompense of your toil.
- And know that the recompense of the reward of the righteous is for the time to come.