Pirke Aboth, the Sayings of the Fathers (Herford translation)

Pirke Aboth (Sayings of the Fathers) (c. AD 200)

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Chapter 1.

1. Moses received Torah from Sinai and delivered it to Joshua, and Joshua to the Elders, and the Elders to the Prophets, and the Prophets delivered it to the men of the Great Synagogue. They said three things: Be deliberate in judgement; and raise up many disciples; and make a fence for the Torah. 2. Simeon the Just was of the remnants of the Great Synagogue. He used to say: On three things the world standeth: on the Torah, and on the Service, and on the doing of kindnesses. 3. Antigonos of Socho received from Simeon the Just. He used to say: Be not like slaves who serve the master with a view to receiving a present; but be like slaves who serve the master not with a view to receiving a present: and let the fear of Heaven be upon you. 4. Jose ben Joezer of Zeredah and Jose ben Johanan of Jerusalem received from them. Jose b. Joezer of Zeredah said: Let thy house be a house of meeting for the Wise, and bedust thyself with the dust of their feet, and drink with thirst their words.

5. Jose b. Johanan of Jerusalem said: Let thy house be opened wide; and let poor folk be thy household; and talk not much with the wife. [He said it concerning his own wife; much more concerning the wife of his associate. Hence the Wise have said: So long as a man talks much with the wife he causes evil to himself, and desists from words of Torah, and his end is that he inherits Gehenna.] 6. Joshua b. Perahiah and Nittai the Arbelite received from them. Joshua b. Perahiah said: Make to thyself a teacher; and get thee an associate; and judge every man with a leaning to his merit. 7. Nittai the Arbelite said: Keep far from an evil neighbour, and consort not with the wicked, and be not heedless of retribution. 8. Judah b. Tabbai and Simeon b. Shetah received from them. Judah b. Tabbai said: Make not thyself as those that prepare the judges; and when the suitors are standing before thee let them be in thine eyes as wicked men; and when they have been dismissed from before thee let them be in thine eyes as just men who have received their sentence.

9. Simeon b. Shetah said: Do much in examining the witnesses; and be careful in thy words; perchance by means of them they may learn to lie. 10. Shemaiah and Abtalion received from them. Shemaiah said: Love work, and hate mastery, and make not thyself known to the government. 11. Abtalion said: Ye Wise, be careful in your words; lest ye become guilty with the guilt that involves exile, and be exiled to a place of evil waters, and the disciples that come after you drink and die, and the Name of Heaven be found profaned. 12. Hillel and Shammai received from them. Hillel said: Be of the disciples of Aaron, one

that loves peace, that pursues peace, that loves mankind and brings them nigh to Torah. 13. He used to say: Whoso makes great his name destroys his name; whoso adds not makes to cease; and he who will not learn is guilty so as to deserve killing. And whoso serves himself with the crown passes away.

14. 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? 15. Shammai said: Make thy Torah a fixed duty; say little and do much; and receive every man with the look of a cheerful face. 16. Rabban Gamaliel said: Make to thyself a teacher; and remove thyself from what is doubtful; and do not often tithe by mental valuation. 17. Simeon his son said: All my days I have grown up among the Wise, and I have not found anything better than silence; and not study is the chief thing but action; and whoso makes many words occasions sin. 18. Rabban Simeon b. Gamaliel said: On three things the world stands: on judgement, on truth, and on peace. [As it is said: 'Truth and judgement of peace judge ye in your gates.']

Chapter 2.

1. Rabbi said: What is that right way which a man should choose for himself? Whatever is an honour to him that does it and an honour to him in the sight of men. And be careful over a light precept as over a weighty, for thou knowest not the giving of the rewards of the precepts. And reckon the loss involved in a precept against its reward, and the reward of a sin against its loss. And keep in view three things, and thou wilt not come into the clutches of sin; know what is above thee, an eye that sees and an ear that hears, and all thy deeds written in a book. 2. Rabban Gamaliel the son of Rabbi Judah the Prince said: Comely is study of Torah with worldly occupation, for toil in both makes sin forgotten. And all Torah without work ends in failure and brings with it sin. And let all who labour with the congregation labour with them for the Name of Heaven, for the merit of their fathers upholds them, and their righteousness standeth for ever. And ye—I confer upon you, saith God, [plenteous] reward, as if ye had wrought.

3. Be careful with the government, for they do not come near to a man except for their own need; and they appear like friends in the hour of their advantage, and they stand not by a man in the hour of his need. 4. He used to say: Make His will as thy will that He may make thy will as His will; efface thy will before His will that He may efface the will of others before thy will. 5. Hillel said: Separate thyself not from the congregation, and be not sure of thyself till the day of thy death; and judge not thine associate until thou comest to his place. And say not of a word which cannot be understood that it will be understood in the end. And say not 'when I am at leisure I will study'; perchance thou wilt not be at leisure. 6. He used to say: A rude man fears not sin; and no vulgar person is pious; and the shy man does not learn nor the passionate teach, nor he that hath much business become wise. And in a place where there are no men strive to be a man.

7. Moreover, he saw a skull which floated on the face of the water, and he said to it: Because thou drownedst they drowned thee; and at the last they who drowned thee shall be drowned. 8. He used to say: More flesh more worms; more wealth more care; more maidservants more lewdness; more menservants more thieving; more women more witchcraft; more Torah more life; more classroom more wisdom; more counsel more discernment; more righteousness more peace. Whoso has gained a good name has gained it for himself; who has gained for himself words of Torah has gained for himself the life of the world to come. 9.

Rabban Johanan b. Zaccai received from Hillel and from Shammai. He used to say: If thou hast practised much Torah, take not credit to thyself, for thereunto wast thou created. 10. Five disciples there were to Rabban Johanan b. Zaccai, and these are they: Rabbi Eliezer b. Hyrcanus, Rabbi Joshua b. Hananiah, Rabbi Jose the priest, Rabbi Simeon b. Nathaniel, and Rabbi Eleazar b. Arach. He used to sum up their praise—Eliezer b. Hyrcanus is a plastered cistern which loseth not a drop; Joshua b. Hananiah, happy is she who bore him; Jose the priest is pious; Simeon b. Nathaniel feareth sin; Eleazar b. Arach is a full-flowing spring.

11. He used to say: If all the Wise of Israel were in one scale of the balance and Eliezer b. Hyrcanus in the other scale, he would weigh down them all. Abba Saul said, in his name: If all the Wise of Israel were in one scale of the balance and Eliezer b. Hyrcanus with them, and Eleazar b. Arach in the other scale, he would weigh them all down. 12. He said to them: Go and see what is that good way to which a man should cleave. R. Eliezer said: A good eye. R. Joshua said: A good associate. R. Jose said: A good neighbour. R. Simeon said: He that regards the result of an action. R. Eleazar said: A good heart. He said to them: I regard the words of Eleazar b. Arach more than your words, for your words are included in his. 13. He said to them: Go and see what is that evil way from which a man should keep himself. R. Eliezer said: An evil eye. R. Joshua said: An evil associate. R. Jose said: An evil neighbour. R. Simeon said: He that borrows and does not pay. [He that borrows from man is as he that borrows from God, blessed be He; as it is said, 'The wicked borroweth and payeth not, but the righteous showeth favour and giveth.'] R. Eleazar said: An evil heart. He said to them: I regard the words of Eleazar b. Arach more than your words; for your words are included in his.

14. They said each three things. R. Eliezer said: Let the honour of thine associate be dear to thee as thine own. And be not easily wroth; and repent one day before thy death. And warm thyself at the fire of the Wise, and be careful of their glowing coal lest thou be singed. For their bite is the bite of a jackal, and their sting the sting of a scorpion, and their hiss the hiss of a serpent, and all their words like coals of fire. 15. R. Joshua said: An evil eye and the evil principle and hatred of mankind drive a man out of the world. 16. R. Jose said: Let the wealth of thy associate be dear to thee as thine own. And set thyself to learn Torah, for it is not a legacy to thee. And let all thy actions be to the Name of Heaven.

17. R. Simeon said: Be careful in reading the 'Shema' and in prayer. And when thou prayest make not thy prayer a fixed form, but [mercies and] entreaties before God. [As it is said: 'For he is gracious and merciful, longsuffering and full of compassion, and repenteth him of the evil.'] And be not wicked in thine own sight. 18. R. Eleazar said: Be alert to learn Torah, [and know] what thou shalt answer to an Epicurean; and know before whom thou toilest, and who is master of thy work, [who will pay the hire of thy labour]. 19. R. Tarphon said: The day is short and the work is great, and the labourers are slow, and the hire is much, and the master of the house is urgent. 20. He used to say: It is not incumbent on thee to finish the work, and thou art not free to desist from it. If thou hast learned much Torah,

they will give thee much hire; and the master of thy work is faithful who will pay thee the hire of thy labour; and know that the giving of the reward of the righteous is for the time to come.

Chapter 3.

1. Akabia b. Mahalalel said: Keep in view three things, and thou wilt not come into the clutches of sin;—know whence thou comest, and whither thou goest, and before whom thou art to give strict account. Know whence thou comest,—from a fetid drop; and whither thou goest,—to the place of dust, worm, and maggot; and before whom thou art to give strict account,—before the King of the kings of the kings, the Holy One, blessed be He. 2. R. Hanina, the deputy of the priests, said: Pray for the peace of the kingdom; for except for the fear of that we should have swallowed up each his neighbour alive. 3. R. Hanina b. Teradion said: When two sit and there are not between them words of Torah, lo, this is 'the seat of the scornful', as it is said: 'Nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful'. But when two sit and there are between them words of Torah, the Shechinah rests between them, as it is said: 'Then they that feared the Lord spake one with another, [and the Lord hearkened and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon His name'].

4. [I find here only two. Whence it is proved that when even one sits and is occupied with Torah the Holy One, blessed be He, fixes for him a reward? As it is said: 'Let him sit alone and be silent, for he hath taken it upon him.'] 5. R. Simeon said: Three who have eaten at one table and have not said over it words of Torah, lo, they are as if they had eaten sacrifices of the dead, as it is said: 'For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness without God.' But three who have eaten at one table and have said over it words of Torah are as if they had eaten from the table of God, blessed be He, as it is said: 'And he said to me, This is the table that is before the Lord.' 6. R. Hanina b. Hachinai said: He who wakes in the night, and he who walks alone by the way and turns his heart to idle thoughts, lo, he makes himself guilty against his soul.

7. R. Nehunia b. ha-Kanah said: Every one who receives upon him the yoke of Torah, they remove from him the yoke of the kingdom and the yoke of worldly occupation. And every one who breaks off from him the yoke of Torah, they lay upon him the yoke of the kingdom and the yoke of worldly occupation. 8. R. Halaphta [b. Dosa] of Chephar Hanania said: When ten sit and are occupied with Torah, the Shechinah is among them, as it is said: 'God stands in the congregation of God.' [And whence is it proved for even five? As it is said: 'He hath founded His troop upon the earth.'] whence even three? As it is said: 'He judgeth

among gods.' And whence even two? As it is said: 'Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another.' And whence even one? As it is said: 'In every place where I record My name I will come to thee and will bless thee.'

9. R. Eleazar b. Judah of Bartotha said: Give Him of what is His, for thou and thine are His. And thus the Scripture saith, in the place concerning David, 'For all things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee.' 10. R. Jacob said: He who walks by the way and studies and breaks off his study and says, 'How beautiful is that tree,' and 'how beautiful is that fallow', the Scripture reckons it to him as if he had made himself guilty against his soul. 11. R. Dosthai b. Jannai, in the name of R. Meir, said: A disciple of the Wise who sits and studies and forgets a word of his study, the Scripture reckons it to him as if he had made himself guilty against his soul; as it is said: 'Only take heed to thyself and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen.' It may be that his study has been hard to him. Learn to say, 'Lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life.' Lo! he makes not himself guilty until he sits and turns them away from his heart.

12. R. Hanina b. Dosa said: Every one whose fear of sin precedes his wisdom, his wisdom endures; and every one whose wisdom precedes his fear of sin, his wisdom does not endure. 13. He used to say: Every one whose deeds are more than his wisdom, his wisdom endures. And every one whose wisdom is more than his deeds, his wisdom does not endure. 14. He used to say: Every one with whom the spirit of mankind is pleased, the Spirit of God is pleased with him. And every one with whom the spirit of mankind is not pleased, the Spirit of God is not pleased with him. 15. R. Dosa b. Harchinas said: Morning sleep, and midday wine, and children's talk, and sitting in the meeting-houses of the vulgar, drive a man out from the world. 16. R. Eleazar, the Modiite, said: He who profanes holy things and despises the set feasts [and shames his associate in public], and makes void the covenant of Abraham our father, and discloses meanings in the Torah which are not according to the Rule, yea, even if he have [Torah and] good works, he has no portion in the world to come.

17. R. Ishmael said: Be light-minded and yielding to forced service, and receive every man with gladness. 18. R. Akiba said: Laughter and light-mindedness accustom a man to shame. Tradition is a fence for Torah. Vows are a fence for separation. A fence for wisdom is silence. 19. He used to say: Beloved is man in that he was created in the image of God. [Greater love was it that it was known to him that he was made in the image.] As it is said: 'In the image of God he made man.' Beloved are Israel, that they are called sons of God. Greater love was it that it was known to them that they were called sons of God. As it is said: 'Sons are ye to the Lord your God.' xii. Beloved are Israel, in that to them was given the precious instrument wherewith the world was created. Greater love was it that it was known to them that there was given to them the precious instrument wherewith the world was created, as it is said: 'For a good doctrine I have given you; forsake not my Torah.' All is foreseen, and free-will is given, and the world is judged by goodness, and all is according to the amount of work.

20. He used to say: All is given on pledge, and the net is spread over all the living; and the shop is open and the shopman gives credit, and the account-book is open and the hand writes, and every one who will borrow comes and borrows, and the collectors go round continually every day, and exact payment from man whether with his knowledge or without it; and they have whereon to lean, and the judgement is a judgement of truth; and everything is prepared for the banquet. 21. R. Eleazar b. Azariah said: 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; if there is no fear there is no wisdom. If there is no knowledge there is no discernment; if there is no discernment there is no knowledge. If there is no meal there is no Torah; if there is no Torah there is no meal.

22. He used to say: Every one whose wisdom is greater than his deeds, to what is he like? To a tree whose branches are many and its roots few; and the wind comes and roots it up and turns it over on its face. [As it is said: 'For he shall be like a tamarisk in the desert, and he shall not see when good cometh, but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, a salt land undwelt in.'] But every one whose deeds are more than his wisdom, to what is he like? To a tree whose branches are few and its roots many, which, if all the winds that are in the world come and blow upon it, they move it not from its place; [as it is said: 'For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that sendeth out its roots by the river, and shall not fear when heat cometh, but his leaf shall be green; and in the year of drought he shall not be anxious, neither shall cease from yielding fruit].

23. R. Eleazar Hisma said: Offerings of birds and purifications, these are the main Rules. Astronomy and geometry are mere fringes to wisdom.

Chapter 4.

1. Ben Zoma said: Who is wise? He who learns from every man; as it is said: 'From all my teachers I get understanding, for thy testimonies are my conversation.' Who is mighty? He who controlleth his evil disposition; as it is said: 'Better is the long-suffering than the mighty, and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.' Who is rich? He that rejoiceth in his portion; as it is said: 'When thou eatest of the labour of thy 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 honoured? He who honoureth mankind; as it is said: 'For them that honour Me I will honour, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed.' 2. Ben Azai said: Be swift towards a light precept [as towards a weighty one] and flee from sin; for precept leads to precept and sin leads to sin. For the reward of a precept is a precept, and the reward of a sin is a sin.

3. He used to say: Despise not any man, and be not captious at any thing; for you find no man that has not his hour, and no thing that has not its place. 4. R. Levitas of Jabneh said: Be exceedingly humble, for the hope of man is only the worm. 5. R. Johanan b. Berokah said: 'Every one who profanes the Name of Heaven in secret, they exact punishment of him openly; the ignorant and the wilful are alike sinners in regard to the profaning of the Name. 6. R. Ishmael his son said: He who learns with a view to teaching, they give him the opportunity to learn and to teach; he who learns with a view to doing, they give him the opportunity to learn and to teach and to do. 7. R. Zadok said: [Separate not thyself from the congregation, and be not as they who prepare the judges]. Make not them a crown wherewith to magnify thyself, nor a dish to eat from. And thus Hillel used to say: He who serves himself with the crown passes away. Behold, [thou hast learned.] 'Every one that makes a profit from words of Torah removes his life from the world.'

8. R. Jose said: Every one who honours the Torah is himself honoured of men. And every one who dishonours the Torah is himself dishonoured of men. 9. R. Ishmael his son said: He who withdraws from judgement gets rid of enmity, theft and perjury; and he who is haughty in his teaching is foolish, wicked and arrogant. 10. He used to say: Judge not alone; for there is none save One that judgeth alone. And say not to thy colleagues, Receive my opinion; for they are entitled and thou art not. 11. R. Jonathan said: Every one who fulfils the Torah when poor will in the end fulfil it when rich; and every one who makes

it vain when rich will in the end make it vain when poor. 12. R. Meir said: Do little in business and be busy with the Torah; and be humble of spirit before all men; and if thou hast been idle in respect of the Torah, there will be many idle things in thy way; and if thou hast laboured at the Torah, there will be for Him much reward to give thee.

13. R. Eliezer b. Jacob said: He who does one precept gains for himself one advocate; and he who commits one transgression gains for himself one accuser; repentance and good works are as a shield in face of punishment. 14. R. Johanan, the sandal-maker, said: Every assembly which is for the sake of Heaven will in the end be established; and one that is not for the sake of Heaven will in the end not be established. 15. R. Eleazar b. Shammua said: Let the honour of thy disciple be dear to thee as the honour of thy associate, and the honour of thy associate as the fear of thy teacher, and the fear of thy teacher as the fear of Heaven. 16. R. Judah said: Be careful in teaching; for error in teaching amounts to sin. 17. R. Simeon said: There are three crowns; the crown of Torah, the crown of priesthood and the crown of royalty; but the crown of a good name mounts above them.

18. R. Nehorai said: Betake thyself to a place of Torah, and say not it shall come after thee; for thine associates will fulfil it through thee. And 'Lean not upon thine own understanding'. 19. R. Jannai said: It is not in our hands to explain either the prosperity of the wicked or the chastisements of the righteous. 20. R. Matthia b. Harash said: Be first in greeting every man; and be a tail to lions and not a head to foxes. 21. R. Jacob said: This world is like a porch before the world to come. Make thyself ready in the porch, that thou mayst enter into the banqueting-hall. 22. He used to say: Fairer is one hour of repentance and good works in this world than all the life of the world to come; and fairer is one hour of calmness of spirit in the world to come than all the life of this world.

23. R. Simeon b. Eleazar said: Pacify not thy associate in the hour of his anger, and console him not in the hour when his dead is stretched out before him; and question him not in the hour of his vow, and seek not to behold him in the hour of his degradation. 24. Samuel, the small, said: 'Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he is overthrown, [lest the Lord see it, and it displease Him, and He turn away His wrath from him']. 25. Elisha b. Abuiah said: He who learns when a youth, to what is he like? To ink written on new paper. And he who learns when an old man, to what is he like? To ink written on erased paper. 26. R. Jose b. Judah, of Chephar ha-Babli, said: He who learns from the young, to what is he like? To one that eats unripe grapes and drinks wine from his winepress. He that learns from the old, to what is he like? To one that eats ripe grapes and drinks old wine.

27. Rabbi said: Look not at the pitcher but at what is in it. There is a new pitcher that is full of old wine, and an old pitcher in which there is not even new wine. 28. R. Eleazar ha-Kappar said: Jealousy and desire and ambition drive a man out of the world. 29. He used to say: Those that are born are for death, and the dead for making alive, and the living to be judged; to know and to make known and to be known that He is the maker and He the creator, and He the discerner, and He the Judge, and He the witness, and He the adversary,

and He will judge in whose presence there is neither obliquity nor forgetfulness nor respect of persons nor taking a bribe; for all is His; and know that all is according to reckoning. Let not thy nature make thee believe that the grave is a place of refuge. For not of thy will wast thou formed, and not of thy will dost thou live, and not of thy will dost thou die, and not of thy will art thou to give just account and reckoning before the King of the kings of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He.

Chapter 5.

1. By ten Sayings the world was created. And why does the Scripture teach this? Could not the world have been created by one Saying? But it was in order to exact penalty from the wicked who destroy the world that was created by ten Sayings, and to give good reward to the righteous who establish the world that was created by ten Sayings. 2. Ten generations from Adam to Noah, to make known how much long-suffering is with Him; for all the generations provoked Him, until He brought the flood upon them. 3. Ten generations from Noah to Abraham, to make known how much long-suffering is with Him; for all the generations provoked Him, until Abraham our father came, and received the reward of them all. 4. Ten trials Abraham our father was tried with, and he bore them all, to make known how great was the love of Abraham our father.

5. Ten wonders were done for our fathers in Egypt, and ten by the sea. 6. [Ten plagues did the Holy One, blessed be He, bring upon the Egyptians in Egypt, and ten by the sea.] 7. Ten trials did our fathers try God with in the wilderness, as it is said: 'And they tempted Me these ten times, and did not hearken to My voice.' 8. Ten wonders were done in the Sanctuary, [for our fathers]. No woman miscarried through the smell of the sacred flesh; and the sacred flesh did not ever stink; and no uncleanness befell the High Priest on the day of Atonement; and no fly was seen in the slaughter-house; and no defect was found in the sheaf, or in the two loaves, or in the shewbread; and rain never quenched the fire; and wind never overcame the pillar of smoke; the people stood close together yet had room to bow themselves; no serpent nor scorpion did harm in Jerusalem; and none said to his companion, The place is too narrow for me that I should lodge in Jerusalem.

9. Ten things were created 'between the suns'. And these are they: The mouth of the earth; the mouth of the well; the mouth of the ass of Balaam; the bow; and the manna, and the rod of Moses; and the shamir-worm; and writing; and the writing; and the Tables. Some say, also the evil spirits, and the grave of Moses, and the ram of Abraham our father; and some say also the tongs that are made with tongs. 10. Seven things concerning a rude man, and seven concerning a wise man. A wise man does not speak in the presence of one who is greater than he in wisdom; and he does not break in upon the words of his associate; and he does not hasten to reply; he asks according to the Rule, and answers according to the subject; and he speaks on the first thing first, and on the last last; concerning what he has

not heard he says, I have not heard; and he acknowledges the truth. The opposites of these are found in the rude man.

11. Seven kinds of punishment come upon the world for seven main transgressions. When some men tithe and some do not tithe, famine from drought comes; some go hungry and some are full. When they have resolved that they will not tithe at all, famine from tumult and from drought comes. And when they have resolved that they will not offer the cake of dough a famine of extermination comes. Pestilence comes upon the world for the capital crimes mentioned in the Torah which are not within the jurisdiction of the court of justice. Also, for fruits of the seventh year. The sword comes upon the world for suppression of justice and for perversion of justice, and for those that teach in the Torah not according to Rule. The wild beast comes on the world for false swearing, and for profaning of the Name. Exile comes upon the world for false worship, for incest, for bloodshed, and for not giving release to the earth.

12. At four seasons pestilence increases; in the fourth year, in the seventh, at the end of the seventh, and at the end of the Feast in each year. In the fourth, because of the tithe for the poor in the third; in the seventh, because of the tithe for the poor in the sixth; at the end of the seventh, because of the fruits of the seventh; and at the end of the Feast, because of the robbery of the gifts assigned to the poor. 13. Four types of men: He that says, What is mine is mine and what is thine is thine; this is the average type, some say it is the type of Sodom. He that says, What is mine is mine and what is thine is mine, is one of the vulgar; He that says, What is mine and what is thine are thine, is pious. He who says, What is thine and what is mine are mine, is wicked.

14. Four types of character: Easy to provoke and easy to pacify, his gain is cancelled by his loss. Hard to provoke and hard to pacify, his loss is cancelled by his gain. Hard to provoke and easy to pacify, he is pious. Easy to provoke and hard to pacify, he is wicked. 15. Four types of disciples: Quick to hear and quick to lose, his gain is cancelled by his loss. Slow to learn and slow to lose, his loss is cancelled by his gain. Quick to hear and slow to lose, he is wise. Slow to hear and quick to lose, this is an evil lot. 16. Four types of almsgivers: He who is willing to give but not that others should give, his eye is evil towards what is theirs; he who is willing that others should give but does not give himself, his eye is evil towards what is his; he who is willing to give and that others should give, is pious; he who is not willing that he should give or that others should give, is wicked.

17. Four types of them that go to the house of learning: He that goes and does nothing, has the reward of his going; he that goes not but does something, has the reward of doing; he that goes and does something, is pious; he that neither goes nor does anything, is wicked. 18. Four types of them that sit before the Wise: A sponge, a funnel, a strainer and a sieve. A sponge, because it sucks up everything; a funnel, because it receives at one end and lets out at the other; a strainer, because it lets out the wine and keeps back the dregs; a sieve, because it lets out the coarse meal and keeps the fine flour. 19. All love which depends on something—if the thing ceases, the love ceases. If it does not depend on something it ceases

not for ever. What love is that which depends on something? This is the love of Amnon and Tamar. And that which does not depend on something? This is the love of David and Jonathan.

20. Every controversy which is for the name of Heaven will in the end be established; and that which is not for the name of Heaven will not in the end be established. What controversy is that which is for the name of Heaven? The controversy of Shammai and Hillel. And that which is not for the name of Heaven? This is the controversy of Korah. 21. Every one that makes the many virtuous, sin comes not by his means; and every one that maketh the many to sin, they give him not the opportunity to repent. Moses was virtuous and made the many virtuous, and the virtue of the many depended on him; as it is said: 'He executed the righteousness of the Lord, and His judgements with Israel.' Jeroboam sinned and made the many to sin, the sin of the many depended on him; as it is said: 'For the sin of Jeroboam who sinned and made Israel to sin.'

22. Every one who has three things is one of the disciples of Abraham our father. And every one who has three other things is one of the disciples of Balaam the wicked. If he has a good eye, and a lowly soul and a humble spirit, he is of the disciples of Abraham our father. If he has an evil eye, and a boastful soul and a haughty spirit, he is of the disciples of Balaam the wicked. What is the difference between the disciples of Abraham our father and the disciples of Balaam the wicked? The disciples of Balaam the wicked inherit Gehenna and go down to the pit of destruction, as it is said: 'But Thou, O God, wilt bring them down to the pit of destruction. Men of blood and deceit shall not live out half their days; but I will trust in Thee.' But the disciples of Abraham our father inherit the Garden of Eden and inherit the world to come; as it is said: 'That I may cause them that love me to inherit substance, and that I may fill their treasuries.'

23. R. Judah b. Tema said: Be bold as a leopard, and light as an eagle, and swift as a gazelle, and strong as a lion to do the will of thy Father which is in heaven. 24. [He used to say: The bold-faced man is for Gehenna, and the shame-faced man is for the Garden of Eden. May it be Thy will, O Lord our God and the God of our fathers, that Thy city may be built speedily in our days; and grant our portion to be in Thy Torah.] 25. [Ben Bag-Bag said: Turn it, and turn it again, for the whole is in it, and the whole of thee is in it; and from it swerve not, for there is to thee no greater good than it.] 26. [Ben He-He said: According to the toil is the pay.] 27. [He said: At five years old one is fit for the Scripture, at ten years for Mishnah, at thirteen for the commandments, at fifteen for Talmud, at eighteen for marriage, at twenty for retribution, at thirty for power, at forty for discernment, at fifty for counsel, at sixty for elderhood, at seventy for grey hairs, at eighty for strength, at ninety for decrepitude, and at a hundred he is as if he were dead and had passed away and vanished from the world.]

Chapter 6. The Acquisition of Torah, the Chapter of R. Meir

1. The Wise have taught in the language of the Mishnah; blessed is He that made choice of them and of their Mishnah. beloved, one that loves God and loves mankind, makes glad both God and mankind. And it clothes him with humbleness and fear, and purifies him to become righteous, pious, upright and faithful; keeps him far from sin and brings him to virtue. Men enjoy from him counsel and sound knowledge, discernment and might; as it is said: 'Counsel is mine and sound knowledge; I am discernment; I have might.' And it gives him sovereignty and dominion and searching out of justice; and they disclose for him secrets of Torah. And he is made like a spring which ceases not, and like a stream that goes on getting stronger. And he is modest and longsuffering and forgiving of insult. And it makes him great and lifts him above all the things that are done.

2. R. Joshua b. Levi has said: Every day a Bath-Qol goes forth from Mount Horeb and proclaims and says 'Woe to mankind because of their insulting of the Torah'; for every one that is not occupied with the Torah is called reprobate; as it is said: 'As a jewel of gold in the snout of a swine, so is a fair woman without sense.' And Scripture says: 'And the tables were the work of God, and the writing writing of God, graven on the tables.' Read not 'haruth' (graven) but 'heruth' (freedom); for none is your freeman, but he who is occupied with the study of Torah. And every one who is occupied in the study of Torah, lo, he exalts himself, as it is said: 'And from Mattanah to Nahaliel, and from Nahaliel to Bamoth.' 3. He who learns from his associate one chapter, one rule, one verse, one saying, even one letter, must show honour to him; for thus we find in the case of David, king of Israel, that he learned from Ahithophel only two things, but he called him his master, his teacher, his familiar friend; as it is said: 'But thou, a man mine equal, my teacher and my familiar friend'. And are not these things an argument a fortiori? If David, king of Israel, who learned from Ahithophel only two things, called him his master, his teacher, his familiar friend, how much more one who learns from his associate one chapter or one rule, or one verse, or one saying, or even one letter, ought to show honour to him: and 'honour' simply means Torah; as it is said: 'The wise shall inherit honour'; and 'The perfect shall inherit good': and 'good' simply means Torah; as it is said: 'For I have given thee good doctrine, forsake not my Torah.'

4. This is the way of Torah: A morsel with salt thou shalt eat, 'and thou shalt drink water by measure'; and thou shalt sleep on the ground, and thou shalt live a life of hardship, and thou shalt labour in the Torah. If thou doest thus 'happy' shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee'; 'happy' in this world, and 'well with thee' in the world to come. 5. Seek not greatness for thyself, neither covet honour. Perform more than thou hast learned. And crave not for the tables of kings; for thy table is greater than their table, and thy crown greater than their crown; and faithful is He, the master of thy work, to pay thee the reward of thy labour.

6. Greater is Torah than priesthood and than sovereignty. For sovereignty is acquired through thirty qualifications, and priesthood by twenty-four; but the Torah is acquired by forty-eight things. And these are they:—'By learning, the listening of the ear, the ordering of the lips, the discernment of the heart, fear, dread, humility, cheerfulness, purity, attendance on the Wise, discussion with associates, argument with disciples, sedateness, Scripture, Mishnah; by little business, little intercourse with the world, little sleep, little conversation, little luxury, little merriment; by forbearance, a good heart, faith in the Wise, acceptance of chastisements; by being one that knows his place, and rejoices in his portion, and makes a fence for his words, and claims not goodness for himself, that is loved, that loves God, that loves mankind, that loves deeds of charity, that loves uprightness, that loves reproofs, and keeps himself far from honour, and puffs not up his heart with his learning, and delights not in giving decisions, that bears the yoke along with his associate, and judges him with a leaning to merit, and establishes him upon truth, and establishes him upon peace, and settles his heart in his study, that asks and answers, that hears and adds thereto, that learns with a view to teaching, and that learns with a view to action, that makes his teacher wise, that makes sure what he hears, and that repeats a word in the name of him who said it. See, thou hast learned: Every one that says a word in the name of him who said it brings redemption into the world; as it is said: 'And Esther said to the king in the name of Mordecai.'

7. Great is Torah, for it gives to them that practise it life in this world and in the world to come; as it is said: 'For they are life to them that find them, and health to all their flesh.' And Scripture says: 'It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones.' And it says: 'She shall be a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her, and happy are they that retain her.' And it says: 'For they shall be a chaplet of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck.' And it says: 'She shall give to thine head a chaplet of grace; a crown of beauty shall she deliver thee.' And it says: 'For by me thy days shall be multiplied, and they shall increase to thee years of life.' And it says: 'Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour.' And it says: 'For length of days, and years of life, and peace shall they add to thee.'

8. R. Simeon b. Judah, in the name of R. Simeon b. Johai, said: Beauty, strength, riches, honour, wisdom, old age, grey hairs, children, are comely for the righteous and comely for the world; as it is said: 'The hoary head is a crown of glory; it shall be found in the way of

righteousness.' And it says: 'Children's children are the crown of old men; and the glory of children are their fathers.' And it says: 'The glory of young men is their strength; and the beauty of old men is the hoary head.' And it says: 'Then the moon shall be confounded and the sun ashamed; for the Lord of Hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously.' 9. R. Simeon b. Menasia said: These seven attributes, which the Wise have assigned to the righteous, were all exemplified in Rabbi and in his sons.

10. R. Jose b. Kisma has said: Once I was walking by the way and there met me a man, and he greeted me, and I greeted him again. He said to me, Rabbi, whence comest thou? I said to him, I am from a great city of wise men and scribes. He said to me, Rabbi, wilt thou dwell with us in our place, and I will give thee a thousand thousand gold pieces and precious stones and pearls? I said to him, If thou gavest me all the silver and gold and precious stones and pearls which are in the world I would not dwell except in a place of Torah. For thus it is written in the book of Psalms, by the hands of David, king of Israel: 'The Torah of Thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver.' And not only so, but in the hour of a man's death it is not silver or gold or precious stones or pearls which accompany him, but Torah and good works alone; as it is said: 'When thou walkest it shall lead thee, when thou liest down it shall watch over thee, and when thou wakest 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. 'When thou wakest it shall talk with thee'—in the world to come. And it says: 'The silver is Mine and the gold is Mine, saith the Lord of Hosts.'

11. Five possessions hath the Holy One, blessed be He, acquired in His world, and these are they: Torah is one possession; heaven and earth are one possession; Abraham is one possession; Israel is one possession; the house of the sanctuary is one possession. Whence is this proved concerning Torah? That which is written: 'The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old.' Whence concerning heaven and earth? That which is written: 'Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, Heaven is My throne and the earth the footstool of My feet: what is this house that ye build for Me, and what is the place of My rest?' And it says: 'How manifold are Thy works, O Lord! in wisdom hast Thou made them all: the earth is full of Thy possessions.' Whence concerning Abraham? That which is written: 'And he blessed him and said, Blessed be Abraham of God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth.' Whence concerning Israel? That which is written: 'Till Thy people pass over, O Lord, till the people pass over which Thou hast possessed.' And it says: 'As for the saints that are in the earth, they are the excellent in whom is all my delight.' Whence concerning the house of the Sanctuary? That which is written: 'The place, O Lord, which Thou hast made for Thee to dwell in, the Sanctuary, O Lord, which Thy hands have founded.' And it says: 'And He brought them to the border of His Sanctuary, to this mountain which His right hand hath possessed.'

12. All that the Holy One, blessed be He, created in His world, He created it only for His glory; as it is said: 'Every one that is called by My name, and whom I have created for My

glory, I have formed him, I have made him.' And it says: 'The Lord shall reign for ever and ever.'

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