

# TRACT ABOTH.

*(Fathers of the Synagogue--Ethics.)*

## CHAPTER I.

MISHNA A. Moses received the Law on Sinai and delivered it to Joshua; Joshua in turn handed it down to the Elders (not to the seventy Elders of Moses' time but to the later Elders who have ruled Israel, and each of them delivered it to his successor); from the Elders it descended to the prophets (beginning with Eli and Samuel), and each of them delivered it to his successors until it reached the men of the Great Assembly. The last, named originated three maxims: "Be not hasty in judgment; Bring up many disciples; and, Erect safe guards for the Law."

*Tosephhta--Aboth of R. Nathan.*

1Moses was sanctified in the cloud, and received the Torah from Sinai, as it is written [Ex. xxiv. 16]: "And the glory of the Lord abode upon Mount Sinai," which means on *Moses* (for what purpose?), to purify him; this occurred after the ten commandments had been given. So says R. Jose the Galilean; R. Aqiba, however, says: It is written [ibid.]: "And the cloud covered it six days." This refers to the *mountain*, before the ten commandments had been given, and this is what is written further on [ibid.]: "And he called unto Moses the seventh day out of the cloud" (for what purpose?--only) to confer honor upon him.

Said R. Nathan: Why did Moses stay the entire six days

without communication from the Shekhina? To cleanse his body of all the food and drink it contained, that he might be like angels at the time of his consecration.

Said R. Mathia b. Heresh to him: Rabbi, all this stated above was done only to overawe him, that he might receive the words of the Torah with awe, terror, fear and trembling, as it is written [Ps. ii. "Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling."

It happened that R. Josiah and R. Mathia b. Heresh were both sitting and studying the Law. R. Josiah then departed to attend to worldly affairs. Said R. Mathia to him: "Rabbi, what dost thou gain by forsaking the words of the living God, and devoting thyself to worldly affairs? Even though thou art my master, and I thy disciple, yet I dare say that it is not right to do so." (Lest one say that R. Josiah did so from jealousy,) it was said: While sitting and studying the Torah they were jealous of each other, but when they parted they were like friends from youth.

Through Moses the Torah was given on Sinai, as it is written [Deut. v. 19]: "And he wrote them on two tables of stone, and he gave them unto me." And also [Lev. xxvi. 46]: "These are the statutes and ordinances and laws, which the Lord made between him and the children of Israel on Mount Sinai, by the hand of Moses." The Law which the Holy One, blessed be He, has given to Israel, was given only in the hand of Moses, as it is written [Ex. xxxi. 17]: "Between me and the children of Israel." So Moses (because of his purification and sanctification) was privileged to be the representative of Israel before the Lord.

Moses offered the ram of consecration and prepared the oil of anointment, and anointed therewith Aaron and his sons during all the seven days of consecration. With the same oil high-priests and kings were afterward anointed, and Elazar burned the (first) red-cow, with the ashes of which the unclean were purified in later generations. Said R. Eliezer: "The oil of anointment was of such importance that it remained even for the later generations, for Aaron and his sons were consecrated with the oil of anointment, as it is written [Ex. xxx. 30]: 'And Aaron and his sons shalt thou anoint, and consecrate them to be priests.'" (Hence we see that although Aaron was a high-priest, his sons, nevertheless, stood in need of anointment.)

Joshua received it (the Law) from Moses, as it is written

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[paragraph continues] [Numb. xxvii. 20]: "And thou shalt put some of thy greatness upon him, in order that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient." The elders (who lived after Moses) received it from Joshua, as it is written [Judges ii. 7]: "And the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that lived many days after Joshua, who had seen all the great deeds of the Lord, which he had done for Israel." The judges received it from the elders, as it is written [Ruth, i. 1]: "And it came to pass in the days when the judges judged." <sup>1</sup> The prophets received it from the judges (beginning with Samuel the prophet, who was also a judge), as it is written [Jerem. vii. 25]: "And I sent unto you *all* my servants the prophets, sending them daily in the morning early." Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi received it from the prophets. The men of the Great Assembly received it from Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, and they said the following three things mentioned in the Mishna:

*"Be deliberate in judgement."* How so? It means a man shall be slow in his judgment, for he who is slow is deliberate, as it is written [Prov. xxv. 1]: "Also these are the proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah the king of Judah have collected." They have not collected them, but they were deliberating upon them before (making them public). Abba Saul, however, said: "Not only were they deliberating over them, but they also explained them."

Formerly it was said: The books of Proverbs, Song of Songs, and Ecclesiastes were hidden, because they are only parables, and do not belong to the Hagiographa; the men of the Great Assembly, however, came and explained them, as it is written [Prov. vii. 7-20]: "And I beheld among the simple ones, I discerned among the youths, a lad void of sense, etc. and, behold, a woman came to meet him with the attire of a harlot and obdurate of heart; she is noisy and ungovernable; in her house her feet never rest; at one time she is in the street, at another in the open places, and near every corner doth she lurk, and she caught hold of him, and kissed him, and with an impudent face she said to him, 'I had bound myself to bring peace-offerings; this day have I paid my vows; therefore I am come forth to meet thee, to seek thy presence

diligently, and I have found

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thee. With tapestry coverings have I decked my bed, with embroidered coverlids of the fine linen of Egypt. I have sprinkled my couch with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. Come, let us indulge in love until the morning: let us delight ourselves with dalliances. For the man is not in his house, he is gone on a journey a great way off; the bag of money hath he taken with him; by the day of the new-moon festival only will he come home." And it is written also in Song of Songs [vii. 12, 13]: "Come, my friend, let us go into the field; let us spend the night in the villages; let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the wine have blossomed, whether the young grape have opened (to the view), whether the pomegranate have budded: there will I give my caresses unto thee." And it is written again in Ecclesiastes [xi. 9]: "Rejoice, O young man, in thy childhood; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youthful vigor, and walk firmly in the ways of thy heart, and in (the direction which) thy eyes see; but know thou, that concerning all these things God will bring thee into judgment." And again in Song of Songs [vii. 10]: "I am my friend's, and toward me is his desire." So we see that the last-mentioned passage of the Song of Songs explains all that was mentioned above; under the term "my friend's" the Lord is understood. Hence (it is sure) that they were not only deliberating, but also explaining them.

According to others the statement "Be deliberate in judgment means to teach that one shall be careful with his words, and also not to have an irascible manner against those who have received his words, for one who is easily provoked by those who have received his words often forgets his (original) words; for so we find with Moses, our master, who had forgotten his (original) words. (See [Pesachim, p. 129](#): "[Resh Lakish said](#)," etc.)

And where do we find that Moses was irascible with his hearers? It is written [[Numb. xxxi. 14](#)]: "And Moses was wroth. . . . Have you allowed all the females to live?" And it is written [*ibid.*, *ibid.* 16]: "Behold . . . through the counsel of Bil'am." How so? Infer from this that this was the advice of Bil'am given to Balak: "These people, your enemies, are hungry for food and are thirsty for drink, as they have nothing but manna. Go and put up tents for them, place in them food and drink, and seat in them beautiful women, daughters of nobles, so that the people may turn to Baal Peor." (This will be given in Sanhedrin in detail.)

Now from this we may draw an *a fortiori* conclusion. If

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Moses our master, the wisest of the wise and the father of the prophets, at the time he became angry at his listeners forgot his original words, so much the more would we commoners. From this we should learn how necessary it is to be careful and not irascible.

Ben Azai says: Be careful in thy words, that thy hearers shall not err through them.

"*And erect safeguards for the Law.*" That means that one shall make a safeguard to his words as the Holy One, blessed be He, has done. Adam the First made one to his; the Torah made one to its words; Moses and Job likewise made safeguards to their words, and so also the Prophets and Hagiographers have all made safeguards to their words.

The safeguard that the Holy One, blessed be He, made is this [Deut. xxix. 23]: "Even all the nations will say, wherefore hath the Lord done thus unto this land?" Infer from this that it was known beforehand to Him, by whose one word the universe was created, that the future generations will ask this; therefore he said to Moses: Write the answer for the future generations [ibid., ibid. 24, 25]: "Then shall men say, because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord, etc., and they went and served other gods and bowed down to them--gods which they knew not, and which he had not assigned unto them."

We see, then, that the Holy One, blessed be He, made these answers, to prevent His people from incurring His wrath by their questions, and that they might live in peace.

Adam the First's safeguard to his words was thus [Gen. ii. 16, 17]: "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for on the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

We see, then, that Adam did not want to give Eve the exact words he received, but he added [ibid. iii. 3]: "Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die," in order that they should take care even not to touch the tree. At that time the wicked serpent said to himself: "As it is impossible for me to make Adam stumble (for he himself received the words from the Lord), I will make Eve stumble." He sat by her and had a long conversation with her. He said to her: "As thou sayest that the Holy One, blessed be He, has forbidden thee to touch it, see that I am touching it and will not die, and the same will

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be with thee." And so he did: he arose and shook the tree with his hands and feet till the fruit fell down. [According to others the serpent did not actually touch the tree at all, because as soon as the tree saw the serpent it stopped him and said: "Thou wicked one, do not touch me," as it is written [Ps. xxxvi. 12]: "Let not come against me the foot of pride, and let not the hand of the wicked chase me off." Another explanation of the above passage is, that it has referred to Titus, who beckoned with his hand, and struck the altar, saying: "λυχος! λυχος! (wolf!) thou art a king, and I am a king, come and engage with me in battle. How many oxen were slaughtered upon thee; how many heads of birds were pinched off on thee; how many measures of wine were poured upon thee; how much incense of *spices* was burned upon thee, thou art the one who destroys the whole world," as it is written [Is. xxix. 1]: "Woe to Ariël, to Ariël, the town where David dwelt! Add ye year to year; let the festivals come round in order."]

The serpent said again to her (Eve): "If thou sayest that the Holy One, blessed be He, forbade to eat it, see I eat of it, and do not die, and thou mayest do the same and thou wilt not die." So Eve said to herself, the injunctions of my master are unfounded. [(There is a tradition that) at first Eve called Adam nothing but master.] She then herself ate of the fruit and gave it to Adam, and he too ate, as it is written [Gen. iii. 6]: "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that, it was pleasant to the eyes," etc.

With ten curses was Eve cursed at that time, as it is written [ibid., ibid. 16]: "Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy pain and (the suffering of) thy conception; in pain shalt thou

bring forth (children), and for thy husband shall be thy desire, but he shall rule over thee." "I will greatly multiply"--those are the two afflictions of blood that a woman has to suffer: that of her menstruation and that *primæ noctis*. "And thy suffering" means the rearing of children; "and thy conception" means the pain of pregnancy. "In pain shalt thou bring forth children" is to be taken in its literal sense. "And for thy husband shall be thy desire"; infer from this that the woman is longing for her husband during his absence on a journey. She is wrapped like a mourner, separated from all men as if she were in prison and as if she were excommunicated from all mankind. And who caused all this? The words that Adam added: "Ye shall not touch it." From this they deduced the maxims that

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if one makes a safeguard to his words (without stating that it is such) he cannot stand by it. Consequently they said that one must not add to what he has heard. Said R. Jose (this is what people say): "It is better to have a wall of ten spans which is solid, than one of a hundred ells which is tottering."

What were the thoughts of the wicked serpent at that time? "I will slay Adam and marry his wife, and I will be king of the whole world, I will walk erect, and will banquet on the best of the land." Then the Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: "Thou hast thought to slay Adam and marry his wife, therefore I will put enmity (between thee and the woman); thou hast thought to be king of the world, therefore be thou cursed among all the cattle; thou hast thought to walk erect, therefore upon thy belly shalt thou go; thou hast thought to banquet on the best of the land, therefore dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life."

R. Simeon b. Menassia says: "Woe that a great servant was lost to the world, for if the serpent had not been accursed, every one would have had two serpents in his house. He would send one to the West, and the other to the East, and they would bring him diamonds, precious stones and pearls, and all the valuable things of the world, and no creature could stand against them, and furthermore they could be used instead of a camel, ass, and mule in the field, garden," etc.

R. Jehudah b. Bathyra says: "Adam was sitting in the Garden of Eden and the angels served him with roasted meat and chilled wine." When the serpent saw this and observed this honor, he became jealous.

How was Adam created? The first hour his dust was gathered, the second the form was created, the third he became a body, the fourth his members were joined, the fifth the openings were developed, the sixth the soul was put unto him, the seventh he rose to his feet, the eighth Eve was mated to him, the ninth he was brought into the Garden of Eden, the tenth the command was given to him, the eleventh he sinned, the twelfth he was driven out and went away; this is what is written [Ps. xlix. 21]: "*Ve Adam bikor bal yolin*." 1 (Adam, "Bal Yolin"--he shall not stay over night.) [We have learned in Tract Rosh Hashana, p. 55: On the first day which psalm did

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they say? "Unto the Lord belongeth the earth with what filleth it" [Ps. xxi. 17]; this was because He created and is still continuing to create, and He is judging the world. On the second day they

said: "Great is the Lord and highly praised, in the city of our God" [ibid. xlvi. 2]; it is because He divided all His creatures and became the one ruler of the universe. On the third they said: "God standeth in the congregation of God, in the midst of judges doth He judge" [ibid. lxxxii. 1]; it is because He then created the sea, the land, and the earth was rolled to its right place, and room was made for His congregation. On the fourth day they said: "O God of vengeance, Lord! O God of vengeance, shine forth" [Ps. xciv. 1]; because then He created the sun, the moon, the stars, and the planets which give light to the world, and the Lord will punish those who worship them. On the fifth they said: "Sing aloud unto God our strength; shout joyfully unto the God of Jacob" [Ps. lxxxii. 2]; because He then created the birds, the fishes, and the great sea monsters, who (the birds) fill the world with song. On the sixth they said: "The Lord reigneth, He is clothed with excellency; the Lord is clothed, He had girded Himself with strength: (therefore) also the world is firmly established, that it cannot be moved." Because then He finished all His work He became exalted and placed Himself on the loftiest point of the world. On the seventh they said: "A psalm or song for the Sabbath day" [ibid. xcii. 1]. A day of entire rest, when there is no eating nor no drinking and no traffick, but the upright sit with their crowns on their heads and are nourished from the glory of the Shekhina, as it is written [Ex. xxiv. 11]: "And they saw (the glory of) God, and did eat and drink," just like the angels.]

Why was Adam created on the last hour of the sixth day? In order that he might immediately partake of the sabbatical meal.

R. Simeon b. Elazar said: Adam can be likened to an Israelite who married a proselyte woman, and he constantly sought to impress upon her mind the following regulations: "My daughter, eat not bread when thy hands are unclean, eat not of fruits which were not tithed, do not violate the Sabbath, do not get into the habit of making vows, and walk not with another man. If thou shouldst violate any of the commands, thou wilt die." Another one, who wished to mislead her, did those very things before her that she had been told were sinful: he ate

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bread when his hands were unclean, partook of fruits which were not tithed, violated the Sabbath, etc., and thereby caused this proselyte to think that everything that her husband told her was entirely false, so she violated all his commandments.

R. Simeon b. Johai said: The case of Adam can be likened to one who, when intending to leave his house, took a barrel and put therein a certain number of dates and nuts; then he caught a scorpion and put it in the top of the barrel, he covered it well and put it in a corner, and said to his wife: "My daughter, everything I have in this house is placed at thy disposal, except this barrel, which thou must touch not at all." As soon as her husband went away, she, however, opened the barrel, put her hand into it, and the scorpion bit her. She took sick and went to her bed. When her husband returned, he asked her what the trouble was. She said: "I put my hand in the barrel, and the scorpion bit me, and I am dying." He said to her: "Did I not tell thee before that thou must not touch the barrel?" He became angry, and drove her out of his house. The same happened to Adam when the Holy One, blessed be He, told him: "Of every tree in the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for on the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die"; but as soon as he did eat he was driven out of the Garden of Eden, and this is what the passage said [Ps. xlix.] (see above).

On the same day on which he was formed, on the very same day his countenance was created;



on the very same day he was made a body, and his members were joined and his openings developed, and on the very same day the soul was put unto him. On the same day he stood upon his feet, and Eve was mated to him. On the same day he pronounced the names of all the creatures, and on the very same day he was placed in the Garden of Eden and received the command (not to eat, etc.), and on the very same day he violated it and was driven out, to comply with what is written [Ps. xlix.] (see above). On the same day they went to bed two, and descended from the bed four. R. Jehudah b. Bathyra, however, says that they descended six (two sons and two daughters). On that day three sentences were pronounced over Adam, as it is written [Gen. iii. 17, 18]: "And unto Adam he said, because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, etc., cursed be the ground for thy sake, in pain shalt thou eat of it, etc., and thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee, and thou shalt eat the herbs of the

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field." As soon as Adam the First heard that the Holy One, blessed be He, said: "And thou shalt eat the herbs of the field," he trembled in his whole body. He said before Him: "Lord of the Universe, shalt I and my cattle eat out of the same trough?" Said the Holy One, blessed be He: "As thou hast trembled, therefore in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat *bread*" [ibid., ibid. 19].

As Adam was laid under three sentences, likewise was it with Eve. As it is written [ibid., ibid. 16]: "I will greatly multiply thy pain and (the suffering of) thy conception; in pain shalt thou bring forth children." The first few days of menstruation are painful. So also are the first few moments of her sexual intercourse with a man. Also when the woman becomes pregnant, her face loses its beauty and becomes yellow the first three months.

When evening drew near, and Adam, looking toward the west, saw that it was becoming darker and darker, he said: "Woe to me is this, because I have sinned, that the Lord darkens the world upon me!" He did not know that it was the course of nature. In the morning, when he saw it lighted up and the sun risen in the east, he rejoiced greatly. He built an altar and sacrificed on it as a burnt-offering an ox, the horns of which were formed before his hoofs. (Rashi explains this elsewhere as follows: All the creatures of the first days of creation were created in their full-grown sizes, and as the head was formed first the horns thereon preceded the hoofs in point of time. This means to say that Adam sacrificed an ox of the first creation.) As it is written [Ps. lxxix. 32]: "And this will please the Lord better than an ox or bullock having horns and cloven hoofs."

(There is a tradition) that the ox of Adam, the steer of Noah, the ram sacrificed by Abraham in place of his son, were all of the first creation, as it is written [Gen. xxii. 13]: "And Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw, and behold, there was a ram *Achar*" (another one, which signifies that it was one differing from the usual ones). At that time (of the sacrifice of the ox, the Holy One, blessed be He, became merciful to him and) three divisions of angels came down with harps, and psalteries, and all musical instruments, and they sang with Adam, as it is written [Ps. xcii. 1-3]: "A psalm song for the Sabbath day. It is a good thing to give thanks to the Lord, etc. To tell in the morning of thy kindness, and of thy faithfulness in the nights." "To tell in the

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morning of thy kindness," this means the world to come, which is likened to the morning, as it is written [Lam. iii. 23]: "They are new every morning, great is thy faithfulness"; and [Ps. xcii.]

"And of thy faithfulness in the night" means this world, which is likened to night, as it is written [Is. xxi. 11]: "The doom of Dumah. Unto me one calleth out of Se'ir, Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?"

The Holy One, blessed be He, said then: "If I will not punish the serpent, that would be as if I Myself were destroying the world, because it would be said that the one that I set up as king over the entire world has disobeyed My command and ate of the forbidden fruit"; therefore immediately He turned to the serpent and cursed him, as it is written [Gen. iii. 14]: "And the Lord God said unto the serpent," etc. R. Jose said: "If the serpent had not been cursed, the world would have been destroyed immediately afterward."

When God created Adam, He formed him with two countenances, front and back, as it is written [Ps. cxxxix. 5]: "Behind and before hast thou hedged me in, and thou placest upon me thy hand." And the angels came down to serve him, and the Holy One, blessed be He, took him under His wings, as it is written: "And thou placest upon me thy hand."

According to others, from this passage is to be inferred that Adam and the Temple were both created with both hands. This view is supported by the following passages [Ps. cxix. 73]: "Thy *hands* have made me and established me"; and it is also written about the Temple [Ex. xv. 17]: "The sanctuary, O Lord, which thy *hands* have established."

*Tosephtha--Aboth of R. Nathan.*

1What is the safeguard that the Torah made to its words? It is written [Lev. xviii. 19]: "And a woman in the separation of her uncleanness shalt thou not approach." One might say it is allowed to embrace and kiss her, and converse with her, therefore it is written: "Shalt thou not approach"; test one say it is allowed to sleep with her on one bed when they are both dressed, therefore it is written [Lev. xv. 33]: "And of her that is suffering in her separation," that means during all the

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days of her separation she shall be as if under a ban; 1 from this it may be said that a woman who makes herself homely during her separation does it in accordance with the will of the sages, and one that adorns herself during that time incurs the dissatisfaction of the sages.

It happened that a man, although faithfully studying (the Bible), learning (the Mishna), and serving (in the colleges) of the sages, died in the prime of life. His wife used to take his phylacteries 2 and go around and visit all the synagogues and colleges, weeping and crying: "My masters, in the Law it is written [Deut. xxx. 20]: 'For he is thy life and the length of thy days'; now there is my husband, who read and learned much and served the sages, why did he die in the prime of life?" And there was no one that gave her a satisfactory answer. Once she met Elijah the prophet, of blessed memory, and he said to her: "My daughter, wherefore criest thou?" and she made to him the same complaint. He then said to her: "What was his wont with thee in the first days of thy separation?" She answered: "Rabbi, he did not even touch me with his little finger; furthermore, he told me, 'Do not touch anything, that thou mayest not bring it into suspicion.'" "And what was his habit with thee in the last days of thy separation?" he said again. She answered: "Rabbi, I used to eat and drink with him, and to sleep with him fully



dressed on the bed, and his body touched mine, but with no intention of anything else." Elijah then said: "Blessed be the Omnipotent that killed him, because it is written [Lev. xviii. 19]: 'Shalt thou not approach.'"

It is written [ibid., ibid. 6]: "None of you shall approach to any that are near of kin to him." From this it was said one must not stay in a separate room with any woman in a hostelry, though she be his sister or daughter, because of public opinion. For the same reason one must not converse with a woman in the market, not even with his wife. For the same reason a man shall not walk behind a woman, even though she be his wife. This was deduced from the following analogy of expression: It is written in the passage of illegal unions, "Ye shall not approach,"

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and here is also written, "Thou shalt not approach," from which it is to be inferred that one shall not approach such things as can cause him to sin (or cause people to talk about him).

There is an ancient saying: Keep thyself apart from the abominable, and from things which are equal to it; and the sages explained it thus: Keep thyself from trivial sin, that it may not lead thee to a grave one. Run to perform a slight meritorious deed, for it will lead thee to the performance of a great one.

It is written [Song of Songs, vii. 3]: "Thy body is like a heap of wheat fenced about with lilies." "Thy body is like a heap of wheat" refers to the assembly of Israel, and "fenced about with lilies" refers to the seventy elders. Another explanation of the words, "Thy body is like a heap of wheat," is that they refer to the lenient religious duties which seem to be of no consequence; "fenced about with lilies," nevertheless when the Israelites perform them they bring them to the world to come. How so? When one is with his wife in his house he can do with her what he pleases even during the separation, as there is nobody to control him or reprove him; but when he refrains from having intercourse with her until she submerge herself, he is doing so only because he is afraid of him who commanded the submerging (in the legal bath); and the same is the case with the first dough, the first wool of shearing (no control can be exercised). Hence such duties, which are as light as lilies, bring the Israelites who perform them to the world to come.

Which is the safeguard that Moses made to his words? It is written [Ex. xix. 10]: "And the Lord said unto Moses, Go unto the people and sanctify them to-day and to-morrow." As Moses the upright regarded it inexpedient to speak to the people in the manner God spake to him, he added one day of his own volition, and said to them [Ex. xix. 15]: "Prepare yourselves for three days." <sup>1</sup> Why did he do so? Because he thought it might happen that one could have seminal intercourse with his wife that day, and so they will receive the Torah when they are unclean; "therefore I will add a third day, that in all the three days they shall refrain from intercourse, in order that

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they may be clean when receiving the Torah from Mount Sinai.

This is one of the things that Moses did of his own accord by drawing an *a fortiori* conclusion

(as will be explained farther on), and his act was afterward sanctioned by the Omnipotent. The same was the case with the breaking of the tables, with his leaving the Tabernacle, and with his separation from a woman. How so? He said: "Since relative to the Israelites who were to be sanctified for the time being only, for the purpose of receiving the ten commandments from Mount Sinai, the Holy One, blessed be He, said unto me, 'Go unto the people and sanctify them to-day and to-morrow,' how much more incumbent is it on me to be particular about the cleanliness of my person, as I must be ready for such a divine call every day and every hour, and do not know when He would speak to me by day or by night." And this was exactly in accordance with the will of God. R. Jehudah b. Bathyra, however, said: Moses did not leave his wife before he was told to do so by the Mighty One, as it is written [Numb. xii. 8]: "Mouth to mouth do I speak with him." It means, mouth to mouth have I told him to separate himself from a woman. According to others, it is from the following passage: It is written [Deut. v. 27]: "Go say to them, return ye unto your tents"; and immediately after [ibid., ibid. v. 28]: "But as for thee, remain thou here by me." Therefore he returned and separated himself. This was exactly the meaning of this passage.

The *a fortiori* in the case of the Tabernacle was thus: He said: As for my brother Aaron, who is anointed with the oil of anointment, and clothed in holy garments for service, the Holy One, blessed be He, regarding him said [Lev. xvi. 2]: "Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place." Now I who am not chosen for such service, as I am not a priest, how much more reason is there for me to leave the Tabernacle? He did so, and it was in accordance with the will of the Omnipotent.

The *a fortiori* in the case of the tables was thus: It is said when Moses ascended on high to receive the tables [which were written and preserved since the creation of the world, as it is written [Ex. xxxii. 16]: "And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, engraved upon the tables," do not read "Charuth" (engraved), but Cheiruth (free), for every one who is studying the Law is a free man].

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[paragraph continues] The angels conspired against Moses, saying: "Lord of the Universe, what is the mortal, that thou rememberest him?" etc. [Ps. viii. 5-9]. They murmured against Moses and said: What is the distinction of one born of woman, that he should come into the council on high? As it is written [Ps. lxxviii. 19]: "Thou didst ascend on high, lead away captives, receive gifts." He nevertheless took the tables and descended with great rejoicing. When he saw the contamination with which they had stained themselves in worshipping the golden calf, he said: If I should give them the tables, I impose upon them a responsibility which might result in capital punishment by divine power, for on the tables is written: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" [Ex. xx. 3]. He started to return, but the seventy elders saw him and ran after him, and grasped the tables on one end, the other end being still in Moses' hand, and he overpowered them all, as it is written [Deut. xxxiv. 12]: "And in respect to all that mighty hand, and in all the great, terrific deeds which Moses displayed before the eyes of all Israel." He looked at the tables, and saw that they were without writing upon them. He then said: How shall I give Israel the tables, now that they have no value? I will rather break them. As it is written [Deut. ix. 17]: "And I took hold of the two tables, and cast them out of my two hands, and I broke them." Said R. Jose the Galilean: I will explain this with a parable. A king said to his ambassador: "Go, betroth to me a maiden who is beautiful, chaste, and of pleasing manners." The ambassador went and betrothed such to him. Soon he found that she acted the harlot. The ambassador was in a predicament. "What is to

be done? If I grive her the marriage contract now, I may subject her to capital punishment. No," he said, "I will tear the marriage contract and thereby release her from my master and save her." So Moses the upright said, as stated above: "Rather will I seize and break them (the tables) and save the Israelites by enabling them, in case they should be charged with idolatry, to say: 'Where are the tables? They did not exist at all.'"

R. Jehudah b. Bathyra said: Moses would not have broken the tables had he not been told by the Mighty One to do so, as it is written: "Mouth to mouth do I speak with him"; that means, I told him to break the tables. According to others, that thought is expressed in the following passage [Deut. ix. 16]: "And I looked, and behold, ye had sinned against the Lord." He would not say "I looked," unless he saw the writing of the

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tables flying away. Anonymous teachers find the same in the following passage [Deut. x. 5]: "And they have remained there, as the Lord hath commanded me." He would not have said he was commanded unless he had been told to break them. R. Elazar b. Azariah infers it from the following passage [ibid. xxxiv. 12]: "Which Moses displayed before the eye of all Israel"; or, "All that Moses did was by the command of the Lord," as in other cases Moses acted according to the command of God. [R. Aqiba infers it from the following passage: "And I took hold of the two tables." What can a man take hold of? Only what he can destroy (*i.e.*, if he had not been commanded to do so he could not have been able to destroy a thing given by God). R. Meir infers it from the following passage: "Which thou hast broken"; it really means, "which thou didst break rightfully" (see Sabbath, p. 165).]

Also Hezekiah, King of Judah, did four things of his own volition which were in accordance with the will of the Lord (see Pesachim, p. 99 in the Mishna): "And Hezekiah prospered in all his works" [II Chron. xxxii. 30].

What is the safeguard that Job made to his words? (Let us see), it is written [Job i. 1]: "And this man was perfect and upright, and fearing God, and eschewing evil." We learn therefrom that Job kept aloof from anything that led to sin, from abomination and from what is equal to it. It may be asked [if it is so, are not the terms "perfect" and "upright" superfluous? (the words "fearing God" and "eschewing evil," are they not sufficient)? Infer from this that the term "perfect" means that he was born circumcised. Adam the first man also came forth circumcised, as it is written [Gen. i. 27]: "And God created man in his image." Also Seth was so born, as it is written [ibid. v. 3]: "And begat a son in his likeness, after his image." Noah, too, was born circumcised, as [ibid. vi. 9] the term "perfect" was used in reference to Noah. Shem was also so born, as it is written [ibid. xiv. 19]: "And Malkizedek, king of Salem." 1 Jacob the patriarch was also so born, as the appellation "perfect" was also applied to him [ibid. xxv. 27]. And Joseph was also so born, as it is written [ibid. xxxvii. 2]: "These are the generations of Jacob: Joseph." It ought to be the generation of Jacob: Reuben (as he was the first-born).

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[paragraph continues] Why is it Joseph? Infer from this, that as Jacob was born circumcised, so also was Joseph. And Moses was born circumcised, as it is written [Ex. ii. 2]: "And when she saw him, that he was a goodly child." What good could his mother see in him? Was he then more

beautiful than all mankind? Say, then, he was born circumcised. Also Balaam the wicked was born circumcised, as it is written [Numb. xxiv. 4]: "Thus saith he who heareth the sayings of God." (According to the tradition of the Talmudists, one who is not circumcised could not hear the words of God, and as Balaam was a Gentile, and not circumcised by his parents, and yet he heard the words of God, consequently he must have been born circumcised.) Samuel was also born so, as he is also graced with the appellation *good* [I Sam. ii. 26]. David was also born so, traditionally, as (the support from Ps. xvi. 1 does not imply anything). Also Jeremiah was born circumcised, as it is written [Jer. i. 5]: "Before yet I had formed thee in thy mother's body I knew thee, and before thou wast yet come forth out of the womb I *sanctified* thee." Also Zerubabel was born so, as it is written [Haggai, ii. 23]: "On that day, saith the Lord of hosts, *will I take thee*, O Zerubabel, the son of Shealtiel, *my servant*." And he (Job) said [Job xxxi. 1]: "A covenant have I made with my eyes: how then should I fix my looks on a virgin?" Infer from this that Job was so scrupulous with himself that he did not even look at a virgin. This is to be made an *a fortiori* conclusion--namely, if a virgin whom he could marry himself, or to his son, brother, or relatives was not looked upon by him because he was so rigorous with himself, so much the more did he refrain from looking at a married woman. But what was the reason that Job was so rigorous with himself as regards looking at a virgin? Because he thought, if I look at her to-day (and like her) and to-morrow she marries some one else, I will have looked on (and liked) a married woman.

What safeguard have the prophets made to their words? It is written [Is. xlii. 13]: "The Lord--as a mighty one will he go forth, like a man of war will he arouse his vengeance: he will shout, yea, raise the war-cry." Is then the Lord as one mighty one? Is He not stronger than all the mighty ones of the world put together? The same is in Amos [iii. 8]: "The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord Eternal hath spoken, who will not prophesy?" Is then the voice of the Lord equal to one lion--is it not as of all the lions of the whole world put

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together? The same meaning is conveyed by the following passage [Ezek. xliii. 2]: "Behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east; and his voice was like a noise of many waters; and the earth gave light from his glory." (Now let us see. We know from a tradition that the words) "like a noise of many waters" mean the angel Gabriel; and by "the earth gave light," etc., is meant the appearance of the Shekhina. Is not here an *a fortiori* conclusion to be drawn? Gabriel, who is only one of the thousands of millions of servants who minister before the Lord, if *his* voice reached from one end of the world to the other, so much the more would that of the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, who has created the universe, who has created the higher and the lower; but the reason why the prophets spake so is, that only such things are mentioned that the eye of a human being can see, and only such things are written that the ear of a human being can hear.

What was the safeguard that the Hagiographers made to their words? It is written [Prov. v. 8]: "Remove far from her thy way and come not nigh to the door of her house." "Remove far from her thy way" means heresy against which one is warned. Lest one say, I have confidence in myself and I am sure that it would not influence me, therefore it is written [Ps. ii. 19]: "All that come unto her return not again, and they will not reach the paths of life." [It is written [ibid. ix. 2]: "She hath killed her cattle, she hath mingled her wine; she hath also set in order her table." This refers to the: wicked. When one goes away with them, they give him food and drink, they clothe and cover him, and give him plenty of money; but as soon as he becomes one of them,

each one recognizes what belonged to him and takes it away from him. Concerning them it is written [ibid. vii. 23]: "Till an arrow cleaveth through his liver, as a bird hasteneth into the snare, and knoweth not that it is done to take his life."

Another explanation to the above passage is this: "Remove far from her thy way" refers to a harlot. When one is warned not to go in this market, and not to enter into that alley, as there is a celebrated and much-spoken-of harlot, and he says, I have confidence in myself even though I go there I would not be seduced by her; nevertheless they must say to him, Go not, for after all thou canst be seduced by her. Did not our sages say: "A man shall not be in the habit of passing by the door of a harlot, for it is written [ibid. vii. 26]: 'For many deadly

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wounded hath she caused to fall: yea, very numerous are all those slain by her"?

What is the safeguard that the sages made to their words? *e.g.*, the reading of Shema (see Berachoth), and so also have the latter sages made a safeguard to their words; and they have multiplied disciples who did the same thing. As to this, however, the schools of Shammai and Hillel differ. The School of Shammai maintain that one shall teach only those who are wise, modest, rich, and come from a good family; the School of Hillel, however, hold that one may teach every one, as there were many transgressors in Israel, and after they had become upright, pious, and righteous men, engaged in the study of the Law, they had the good fortune that from them descended men of uprightness, piety, and righteousness.

*Tosephtha--Aboth of R. Nathan.*

1R. Aqiba said: "Whoever takes a coin from the fund intended for charity to the poor when he is not in need of it, will not die before he will really be in need of assistance." 2 He used to say: One that bandages his eyes or his shoulders, and says: "Give charity to the blind or to the leper," will in the end speak the truth-that is, he will be such. He also said: One that throws his bread on the ground, or scatters his money in his anger, will not die before he will be in actual need of assistance. He said again: One that tears his garments or breaks his vessels in his wrath, will eventually worship idols, for this is the way of the evil thoughts: to-day they urge him to tear his garments, and to-morrow they will advise him to worship idols. And again: One that is desirous that his wife shall die in order to inherit her property, or to marry her sister, or one who is desirous that his brother shall die in order to marry his wife, in the end will be buried by them. Regarding such it is written [Eccl. x. 8]: "He that diggeth a pit will fall into it; and him who breaketh down a fence, a serpent will bite him."

(Here follows a repetition of a Mishna in Baba Kama, which, according to our method, we have omitted.)

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[paragraph continues] R. Dostai b. Janai said: Though thou hast chosen and sown in the first quarter, sow also in the second: perhaps a hail might destroy the first, but the second will be preserved; for thou knowest not which will succeed, whether this or that, or both may be preserved, and both of them will be alike good, as it is written [Eccl. xi. 6]: "In the morning sow thy seed, and

in the evening let not thy hand rest." And even though thou hast sown in the first and second quarters, do not neglect to do so also in the third, as it may happen that a blast might destroy the first, but the latter will be preserved, as is said in the passage just mentioned.

R. Ishmael b. R. Jose said: The above passage refers to study, thus: Study the Law in thy old age, even if thou hast studied it in thy youth. Do not say: "I do not want to study when I am aged"; but study it always, because thou knowest not which will succeed. If thou hast studied the Law in years of plenty, do not count it for the years of famine. The study during times of ease does not count for those of distress, because one thing done in distress is better than a hundred in ease, as it is written [ibid.]: "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening let not thy hand rest." R. Aqiba also said the same.

R. Meir said: When thou hast studied under one master, say not: "It is enough," but go and study under another; yet do not go to all of them, but only to those who were near to the Law from the start (meaning a scholar from a scholarly house), as it is written [Ps. v. 15]: "Drink water out of thy own cistern, and running water out of thy own well."

It is a duty to study under three masters, such as R. Eliezer, R. Joshua, and R. Aqiba, as it is written [Ps. viii. 34]: "Happy is the man that hearkeneth unto me, waiting day by day at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors." [1](#) Because thou canst not know which master's teaching will remain with thee, or perhaps all are good, as may be learned from the above-mentioned passage.

R. Joshua said: "The same passage applies also to this: Marry a woman in thy youth; marry one also (if need be) when you are old; beget children in thy youth, and do so also in thy old age. Do not say, I will not marry again as I have children, but marry and beget more children, as you do not know which of them will be the good."

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He used also to say: "If thou hast given a coin to a poor man in the morning, and another one begs of you in the evening, give him also, as thou knowest not whether both will be benefited by thy donation, and whether both are alike deserving, as it is written: "In the morning sow thy seed." [1](#)

It happened that a pious man who used to spend much in charity, while aboard a ship encountered a great storm, and the ship foundered. R. Aqiba saw him go down, and came to testify before the court in order that his wife might marry again. Before the court adjourned, the man came and stood before them. Said R. Aqiba to him: "Did you not sink into the sea?" He answered: "Yea." "And who brought thee out of the sea?" R. Aqiba asked again. He answered: "The charities that I have given have saved me from the sea." "Whence dost thou know this?" He said: "When I went down in the deep, I heard the noise of the waves. It seemed to me that they said to each other: This man has done charity all his days (and they actually threw me on land)." R. Aqiba then arose and said: Blessed be the Lord the God of Israel, who has chosen the words of the Torah and the words of the sages, for they are preserved everlastingly. As it is written [Eccl. xi. 1]: "Cast thy bread upon the face of the waters; for after many days wilt thou find it again." It is written again [Prov. x. 2]: "And charity will deliver from death."



It happened that to Benjamin the upright, who was the treasurer of charities, there came a woman and asked for food. He said: "I assure you that the treasury is empty." She said: "Rabbi, if thou wilt not help me, thou wilt kill a widow and her seven children." He then fed them at his own expense. Years afterward Benjamin the upright fell ill, and he suffered very much on his sick-bed. Said the angels before the Holy One, blessed be He: "Lord of the Universe, Thou hast said: He who preserves one soul of Israel is regarded (by Scripture) as if he preserved an entire world. Benjamin the upright, who has preserved a widow and seven children, (is entitled) so much more to such consideration, yet he is pining on the couch. of a painful disease." They implored the mercy of God in his behalf, and His decree was annulled, and twenty-two years were added to his life.

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MISHNA B. Simeon the just was one of the remnants of the Great Assembly. His motto was: "The order of the world rests upon three things: on law, on worship, and on bestowal of favors."

*Tosephtha--Aboth of R. Nathan.*

1"Upon the Torah." How so? It is written [Hosea, vi. 6]: For piety I desired, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings." Infer from this that the burnt-offering is more favored than ordinary sacrifices, because it is all burnt up in the fire, as it is written [Lev. i. 9]: "And the priest shall burn the whole on the altar," and elsewhere [I Sam. vii. 9]: "And Samuel took the sucking lamb and offered it for an entire burnt-offering unto the Lord." Yet the study of the Law is more acceptable in the sight of the Lord than burnt-offerings, because he who is studying the Torah knows the will of the Lord, as it is written [Prov. ii. 5]: "Then wilt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and the knowledge of God wilt thou find." From this it may be inferred that when a sage lectures to the public it is accounted to him in Scripture as if sacrificing fat and blood upon the altar.

Two scholars studying together, when a bride or a bier carrying a corpse passes before them, must observe the following rule: If the bride has all she needs to feel that she is such, and if the dead has all that is needed for decent burial, the students shall not interrupt themselves; but if such be not the case, let them suspend their study and go to add to the joy of the bride and to do honor to the dead. [It happened that a wedding procession passed by while R. Tarphon was studying with his disciples, and he directed that the bride be brought up to his house, and he told his mother and his wife to wash, anoint, and ornament her, and to dance for her until she should reach her groom. According to Elias Wilna.]

It also happened that, while R. Judah b. Ilai was teaching his disciples, a wedding procession, which had not sufficient followers, passed by, and he with his disciples took part in the procession until the bride passed.

It happened again that while the same was engaged in teaching his disciples, a bridal party passed by. He asked: "What is

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that and they answered: "A bridal party." He then said: "My sons, arise, evince your interest in

the bride." So we find that the Holy One, blessed be He, bestowed His favor upon a bride, as it is written [Gen. ii. 22]: "And the Lord God *formed* the rib." And in the cities by the sea a bride is called *Beniatha*, "the *formed* one." If He has done so, how much more reason is there for us so to do? Infer from this that the Lord formed Eve and ornamented her like a bride, and brought her to Adam, as it is written [ibid.]: "And brought her unto Adam." Only once has the Lord become a mediator to Adam; henceforward man must procure a mediator for himself, as it is written [ibid., ibid. 23]: "Bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh." Once only was Eve formed out of Adam; henceforward man betroths the daughter of his fellowman.

"*On service.*" How so? As long as the service of the Temple existed, the world was blessed for the sake of its inhabitants, and the rain came down in due season, as it is written [Deut. xi. 13, 14]: "I love the Lord your God, and to serve him . . . that I will send rain for your land in due season." But when the service of the Temple ceased, the inhabitants were not blessed, and the rain did not come down in due time, as it is written [ibid., ibid. 16]: "Take heed to yourselves that your heart be not deceived . . . and he will shut up the heavens that there be no rain." Also Haggai said [ii. 15, 16]: "Direct, I pray you, your heart from this day and upward, before the time that a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of the Lord: since those days were, when one came to a heap of sheaves of twenty (in number), and there were but ten; when he came to the wine-press to draw off fifty measures out of the vat, and there were but twenty." [Why was it not said of the wine-press also "twenty, and there were but ten," the same as of the wheat? Because the wine-press is a better sign than the wheat. There is a tradition that when the vine is spoiled it is a bad sign for the current year.]

Said the Israelites before the Holy One, blessed be He: "Lord of the Universe, why hast Thou done thus to us?" The Holy Spirit answered: "Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to be little, . . . because of my house that lieth in ruins, while ye ran every man unto his own house" [Haggai, i. 9]. "If ye will employ yourselves with the service of the Temple, I will bless ye as heretofore," as it is written [ibid. ii. 18, 19]: "Direct, I pray, your heart . . . from the four and

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twentieth day of the ninth month, even from the day that the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid. . . . Is the seed yet in the barn? Yea, as yet the wine, and the fig-tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive-tree have not brought forth; (but) from this day will I bless you." Infer from this that there is no service which is favored by the Lord more than the Temple service.

"*Upon bestowal of favors.*" How so? It is written [Hosea, vi. 6]: "For kindness I desired, and not sacrifice." Moreover, at the beginning the world was created with kindness, as it is written [Ps. lxxxix. 3]: "To eternity will kindness be built up (*e.g.*, the world is built up with kindness), the heavens--yea, in these wilt thou establish thy faithfulness."

R. Johanan b. Zakkai once went out of Jerusalem, followed by R. Joshua, and seeing the destroyed Temple, R. Joshua said: "Woe to us, that this is destroyed, the only place where the sins of the Israelites were atoned!" R. Johanan corrected him, saying: "My son, do not grieve over it. We have other means of atonement as effective--namely, bestowal of favors, as it is written [Hosea, vi. 6]: 'For kindness I desired, and not sacrifice.' As we find with Daniel, who was occupied in doing good. And what good did he do? He certainly did not sacrifice burnt-offerings and voluntary offerings, as he was in Babylon, and with regard to the place of

sacrifice, it is written [Deut. xii. 13, 14]: 'Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt-offering in every place which thou mayest see; but in the place which the Lord will choose in one of thy tribes, there shalt thou offer thy burnt-offerings.' What good, then, did he do? He rejoiced with people in their joy, he wept with them in their sorrow, he helped and cheered poor brides, he honored the dead by following them to the last resting-place, he gave material aid to the needy, and prayed three times every day, and his prayers were received with favor, as it is written [Dan. vi. 11]: 'And three times every day he kneeled upon his knees, and prayed, and offered thanks before his God,' etc."

When Vespasian came to destroy Jerusalem, he said to the inhabitants: "Fools, wherefore do ye seek to destroy this city and to burn the Temple? All I want of you is to send me a bow or an arrow--*i.e.*, to acknowledge my dominion over you. I will leave you in peace." They, however, said: "just as we killed the two who came before thee, so will it be with thee." When R. Johanan b. Zakkai heard this, he invited the leaders of

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[paragraph continues] Jerusalem to a conference, and said unto them: "My sons, why should you occasion the destruction of the city and insist upon it, as it were, that the Temple be burnt? All the enemy wants is that you send to him a bow or an arrow, and is willing on that condition to depart." But they answered him in the manner they answered Vespasian. The latter had spies within the walls of Jerusalem, and whatever they heard they wrote upon an arrow and threw it outside the wall. In this manner Vespasian learned that R. Johanan b. Zakkai was friendly to Cæsar (and so he really was, and confessed it frankly to the leaders of Jerusalem). When R. Johanan b. Zakkai saw that his efforts during several days in succession to win the leaders for peace proved futile, for the leaders did not listen to him, he sent for his disciples, R. Eliezer and R. Joshua, and said: "My sons, try to take me out of here. Make me a coffin, and I will sleep in it." They did so, and R. Eliezer held the coffin by one end, and R. Joshua held it by the other, and thus carried him at sunset to the gates of Jerusalem. When the gate-keepers asked them whom they had there, they answered: "A corpse; and you know that a corpse cannot remain in Jerusalem over night." They were allowed to go, and they carried him till they came to Vespasian. There they opened the coffin, and he arose and introduced himself to Vespasian, who said: "Since thou art the Rabban Johanan b. Zakkai, I give thee the privilege to ask a favor of me." He answered: "I request nothing but that the city of Jamnia shall be free to me to instruct there my disciples. I will build there a prayer-house, and will perform all the commandments of the Lord." Hereupon Vespasian said: "It is well. Thou mayest go thither, and undisturbed carry out the object of thy desire." R. Johanan b. Zakkai then asked permission to say something to Vespasian. This having been granted, he said: "I can assure you that you will become a king." "How dost thou know it?" He answered: "We have a tradition that the Temple will not be delivered to a common man (in the name of the king), but to the king himself." As it is written [Is. x. 34]: "And he will cut down the thickets of the forest with iron, and the Lebanon shall fall by (means of) a mighty one." 1 It was said that scarcely had a few days elapsed when a messenger came from the city of Rome with the tidings that Cæsar was dead, and the resolution was adopted that Vespasian be his successor.

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At the time when Jerusalem was taken, R. Johanan b. Zakkai, with a trembling heart, was sitting and watching as Eli did, as it is written [I Sam. iv, 13]: "Lo, Eli was sitting upon a chair by the

wayside, watching; for his heart was anxious for the ark of God." When he heard that Jerusalem was destroyed and the Temple burnt, he and his disciples tore their garments, wept, cried, lamented, and said: "Open thy doors, O Lebanon!" [Zech. xi. 1]--that is, the Temple; "and the fire shall eat on thy cedars"--that is, the priests of the Temple, who took the keys and threw them up high and said, before the Holy One, blessed be He: "Lord of the Universe, here are the keys which thou hast intrusted us with, as we were no faithful treasurers and we are no longer worthy to do the work of the King and to eat at his table."

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the twelve tribes all wept, cried, lamented, and said [ibid. 2, 3]: "Wail, fir-tree, for fallen is the cedar; those that were mighty are despoiled," etc. "Wail, fir-tree, for fallen is the cedar"--that is, the Temple; "those that were mighty are despoiled," applies to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and his twelve sons. "Wail, O ye oaks of Bashan"--that is, Moses, Aaron, and Miriam; "for the impervious forest is come down"--that is, the Holy of Holies; "the noise of the wailing of the shepherds, for wasted is their glory"--that is, David and Solomon his son; "the noise of the roaring of young lions, for wasted is the pride of the Jordan"--that is, Elijah and Elisha.

In three things has the Holy One, blessed be he, made mankind differ one from the other: in voice, behavior, and features. "In voice": for what purpose?, The Holy One, blessed be He, has varied the voices of mankind one from the other, to prevent the generations from adultery; because if it would not be so, when a man would leave his house, some one else might come in (in the night time) and do violence to his wife; but as the voices are different, she could recognize that of her husband.

"In behavior": for what purpose? The Holy One, blessed be He, has varied the behavior of mankind one from another, to prevent jealousy; if not so, mankind would be jealous of each other; therefore the behavior of one is different from that of another. "In features": for what purpose? The Holy One, blessed be He, has varied the features of mankind that the women might recognize their husbands, and the men their wives, otherwise all would be mixed up.

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MISHNA C. Antigonus of Socho, who received it from Simeon the just, was in the habit of saying: "Be not like slaves who serve their master for the sake of the compensation; be like such servants as labor for their master without reward; and let the fear of Heaven be upon you."

*Tosephtha--Aboth of R. Nathan.*

1 "The fear of God shall be upon you, that your reward may be double in the world to come." Antigonus from Socho had two disciples, who were studying his words. They communicated them to their disciples, and they in turn to theirs, who sought the reason which prompted the sage to make such an utterance. "Wherefore," they asked, "have our ancestors said such a thing? Is it possible that a laborer will work all day, and not expect to be rewarded in the evening?" What if they had known that there is a hereafter, and that there will be a resurrection? They would in that case not have expressed themselves in that manner. The result was, that these disciples deviated from the path of the Torah, and formed two new schools with exclusively worldly tendencies, that of the Sadducees and that of the Baitusees: Sadducees--because the name of the founder of their school was Zadok; and Baitusees--because the name of the founder

of their school was Baitus. They surrounded themselves with pomp and the brilliancy of shining metals, gold and silver, not so much for the delight and pleasure which they derived from those things as to spite the Pharisees, who deprived themselves of enjoyment here, in order to inherit the world to come, which in their opinion was a mere delusion.

MISHNA D. Jose b. Joezer of Zereda and Jose b. Johanan of Jerusalem received from them. Jose b. Joezer used to say: "Let thy house be the meeting place of the wise; sit gladly at their feet, and drink in their words with avidity."

*Tosephtha--Aboth of R. Nathan.*

2"*Thy house shall be the meeting-place for the wise.*" What does this mean? That the house should be for the use of

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scholars, their disciples and their disciples, in the sense that one man says to the other: "I shall wait for you at that place." Another explanation of that phrase is this: If a scholar comes to thee for the purpose of being instructed by thee, and thou art able to comply with his wish, do so; if thou art not able to teach him, dismiss him at once. Neither shall he sit before thee on the bed, chair, or bench, but on the floor; and every word that thou utterest he shall receive with awe, terror, fear, and trembling.

"*Sit gladly at their feet.*" It means that when a renowned scholar comes to the city you shall not say: "I need him not," but go to him; and do not sit before him on the bed, chair, or bench, but on the floor; and every word that comes from his lips, receive with awe, terror, fear, and trembling, for so our ancestors received the Torah from Mount Sinai. According to another explanation the words: "Sit gladly at their feet," are referred to Rabbi Eliezer, and the words: "Drink their words as a thirsty man drinks water," are referred to Rabbi Aqiba.

For how did R. Aqiba begin his wonderful career? (Was it not in the manner hinted in the above words?) It has been said that when he was forty years old he had not learned yet anything. (At that age, however, he conceived the idea of applying himself to study.) It once happened that, standing at a well, he asked: "Who has made that hollow in the stone?" The people whom he asked answered: "The water which continuously, day after day, falls upon it." They also said (by way of reproach): "O Aqiba, it is strange that thou knowest not the passage in Scripture which reads: 'Water weareth out stones'", [Job, xiv. 19]. Aqiba then drew an *a fortiori* conclusion. He said: "If the soft has so much power over the hard as to bore it (water over stone), how much more power will the Torah, the words of which are as hard as iron, have over my heart, which is flesh and blood?" He at once turned to the study of the Law. He and his son 1 went to a school where children were instructed, and addressed one of the teachers: "Master, teach me Torah." Aqiba and his son took hold of the slate, and the teacher wrote upon it the alphabet, and he quickly learned it; and then wrote it in the reversed order, and learned as fast; then he learned the Book of Leviticus, and proceeded from one book to the other,

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until he finished the study of the Bible. He then sat down at the feet of R. Eliezer and R. Joshua,

and said: "Masters, I beg of you to open to me the underlying principal Mishnayoth." As soon as they recited one Halakha to him, he went away; and, contemplating what they had told him, a new realm of thought was open to him. He saw that there must be a reason why this thing was written here; why this thing was written there, and why this thing has been said so and not otherwise, and why it has been said at all. He went back to his masters questioning, and made them rise and deliberate.

Rabbi Simeon b. Elazar said: I shall illustrate this point with the following parable: A stone-cutter who was doing his work in the mountains was once seen standing upon a rocky height, knocking off small pieces thereof. "What art thou doing?" people asked him. His answer was: "I am trying to uproot this mountain and throw it into the Jordan." They laughed at him. He, however, continued his work; knocked off piece after piece, and when he had reduced the mountain to a big rock, he planted himself against it, and pushed and pushed until he had uprooted the rock, and then threw it into the Jordan, saying: "This is not thy place, that one is." So has R. Aqiba done too, with R. Eliezer and R. Joshua (he compelled them to improve and to rectify their method).

Said R. Tarphon to him: Aqiba, to thee applies the following passage [Job, xxviii. 11]: "The various droppings of water he uniteth into streams, and what is hidden he bringeth forth to light." Things which were hidden from mankind, R. Aqiba brought forth to light.

Every day during the entire time of his learning he used to cut a bundle of straw, half of which he would sell for his needs and the other half he used for light. His neighbors murmured, saying: "Aqiba, thou greatly dost annoy us with the smoke; rather sell it to us, and buy oil with the money and study by its light." He answered them: "The straw supplies me with many things: first, it gives me light for studying; secondly, I warm myself by its flame; and, thirdly, I make my bed on it when I go to sleep."

In the world to come, R. Aqiba will be a menace to the poor who have neglected study. <sup>1</sup> When they will be questioned why

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they had not studied the Law, and they shall answer because they were poor and had to work for a livelihood, then R. Aqiba will be held up to them as one who was also poor and wearied, and yet did study; and if they should say because of their little children, again R. Aqiba will be pointed to, who had many sons and daughters, and yet supported them and his wife Rachel. At the age of forty Rabbi Aqiba began his studies, and at the end of thirteen years he lectured in public. It was said that he did not leave this world until he had tables of gold and silver, and also golden step-ladders to ascend to his bed. His wife went out with an ornament of gold which represented Jerusalem "on her head; and when his disciples said to him: Rabbi, thou hast put us to shame by the profuse jewelry thy wife is wearing," he answered: "She has undergone much suffering, great troubles and privations, for the sake of my study."

Not less astonishing is the beginning of the literary career of Rabbi Eliezer. He was twenty-two years old when, for the first time, he felt a desire for study; and when he intimated to his father that his intention was to sit at the feet of R. Johanan b. Zakkai, his father Hyrcanus told him to plough a full Maanah (a piece of land) without eating anything. R. Eliezer got up early in the



morning and did the will of his father, but then left him. It is said that that day was Friday, and that he went in the evening to his father-in-law to eat. Others say that he did not eat at all, that he fasted from the sixth hour of the eve of Sabbath to the sixth hour from the expiration of Sabbath. On the road he saw something which looked to him like food--it is said that it was cow-dung--he picked it up and put it to his mouth. He continued his journey, and finally came to the place where R. Johanan b. Zakkai had his residence and his school. R. Eliezer remained over night at an hostelry in the neighborhood. In the morning he sat at the feet of the great sage, and whose attention he attracted by the offensive odor that came from his mouth. R. Johanan, attributing the bad smell to an empty stomach, said to him: "Hast thou eaten anything today?" R. Eliezer made no answer. Again the master put the same question to him, and again he was silent. His host was sent for, of whom the sage inquired whether Rabbi Eliezer partook of any food at his place. "No, he did not," the host said. "I did not offer him any food, thinking that he might eat with the Rabbi." "And I," the Rabbi said, "did not offer him any food, assuming that he had eaten at your place. But while

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we are conversing Eliezer is starving." (Food was given to Eliezer, and then) Rabbi Johanan blessed Eliezer, and said unto him: "As thy offensive odor is the result of privation for the sake of study, may thy name shine forth with the glory of scholarship."

Hyrchanus was angry at his son for the course he had taken, and made up his mind to disgrace and disinherit him. But it came to the ears of R. Johanan what Hyrchanus resolved upon to do. It was the day when R. Johanan was lecturing to the great men in Israel that Hyrchanus meant to punish his disobedient son. And the Rabbi appointed watchmen, and advised them: "Should Hyrchanus come, do not allow him to enter the auditorium." They tried to carry out his instruction. But Hyrchanus managed to push himself through and to reach the seats of Ben Zizith Ha Kesseth, Nakdimon b. Gurion, and Calba Shebua, where he sat down with trembling. It is said that on that occasion R. Johanan threw glances of affection at Eliezer, and requested him to open an argument. Modestly did R. Eliezer attempt to decline the honor, saying that he did not know how to begin. But the master and his disciples prevailed, and Eliezer rose and discussed things in an astounding manner, and every subject he touched upon and elucidated pleased Rabbi Johanan to such an extent that he got up and kissed him on the forehead. But Rabbi Eliezer remarked: "Master, everything I said I have learned from thee." Before adjournment Hyrchanus, Eliezer's father, got up and said: "Masters, I had come here with the intention to disgrace my son Eliezer by disinheriting him; but now, however (after I have seen this), I say that all my properties shall be given to him, and his brother shall get none of them."

(It is mentioned that Hyrchanus took his seat by Zizith Ha Kesseth, etc., and is explained why he was so called; but as it is not completed here, the full explanation is given in Tract Gittin.)

Concerning Nakdimon b. Gurion, it was said that the bedding of his daughter was of the value of twelve thousand golden dinars from the city of Tyre, and a golden dinar of Tyre she used to spend for spicing the cookery for every week. She was a childless widow, and was waiting for her brother-in-law to marry her.

And why was he named Nakdimon? Because the sun hastened for his sake. (See Vol. VIII. of Section Moed, Tract Taanith, pp. 51, 52.)

Why was he called Calba Shebua? Because whoever entered, his house hungry as a dog, left satiated. <sup>1</sup> When Vespasian came to destroy Jerusalem, the zealous fanatics were going to burn all his wealth. Said he to them: "Wherefore are ye, destroying this city, and are going to burn my wealth? Wait until I find out what I have in my house." He found that he had food for twenty-two years, of which at least one meal a day could be had by each inhabitant of Jerusalem. He at once gave orders to thresh, to sift and to grind, to knead and to bake, and prepared food for twenty-two years for every one in Jerusalem, but they paid no attention to him. What did the Jerusalemites do? They brought the wagons, sawed them, and smeared them with clay. They also did more than this: they boiled straw and ate it, and every Israelite who took part in the war was placed on the city walls. Said one: If any one give me five dates, I will go down and bring back five heads of the enemy. He received five dates, and he went down and took five heads of Vespasian's men. When Vespasian observed their excrement, and found there was nothing cereal in it, he said to his army: "If those who eat nothing but straw are still slaughtering so many of you, if they would eat and drink as you do, how many more of you would they have killed?"

MISHNA E. Jose b. Johanan of Jerusalem was in the habit of saying: "Let thy house be so wide open that the poor may enter it as were they inmates there; and do not hold too much discourse with woman." The sages have cautioned against talking too much with one's own wife. An inference can then be made with regard to talking with the wife of a neighbor. Hence the wise man said The man who does talk overmuch with woman causes evil unto himself, makes himself insusceptive of the words of the Thora, and in the end will be an heir to Gehenna."

*Tosephtha--Aboth of R. Nathan.*

<sup>2</sup> "*Thy house should be wide open.*" This means that one's house should be wide open south, east, west, and north, as was

the house of Job, which had four entrances made, so that the poor should not have the trouble of walking around the house looking for the entrance, but should find it whichever way they came without any difficulty.

"*As were they inmates there*" [literally: "The poor shall be of thy household"]. It is not meant that the people of thy house shall be poor, but that the poor shall speak of what they ate and what they drank in thy house as they used to tell what they ate and drank in the house of Job. And when they met one another on the road, and asked, "Whence do you come?" the answer was: "From the house of Job." "Whereto are you going?" "To the house of Job." Job's house was in a measure the house of the poor.

When the great afflictions came upon job, he prayed before the Holy One, blessed be He: "Lord of the Universe, have I not fed the hungry and have I not given drink to the thirsty?" as it is written [Job, xxxi. 17 ]: "Or if ever I ate my bread alone and the fatherless did not eat thereof." "And have I not clothed the naked?" as it is written [ibid., ibid. 20]: "And if be have not been warmed with the fleece of my sheep." (Nevertheless I am so punished.) The Holy One, blessed

be He, answered him: job, as yet thou hast not reached one-half of the performances of Abraham. Thou sittest and waitest in thy house, and wayfarers enter. The one who is used to wheat-bread gets wheat-bread, one who is used to meat gets meat, one who is used to drink wine gets wine. Not so Abraham. He was in the habit of going out of his house to hunt up wayfarers, whom he brought under his roof, and entertained them in a better manner than they had been accustomed to. He offered wheat-bread, meat, and wine to those who at home lived on coarser food. Moreover, he built booths on the road and supplied them with refreshments, and those who entered ate and drank, and blessed God for it. He was favored by heaven, and all that the heart desired and the mouth asked for was to be found in Abraham's house, as it is written [Gen. xxi. 33]: "And Abraham planted an **•••** (orchard) in Beer-Sheba. "(The letters of the word **•••** are the initial letters of the words **•••••**, **•••••**, **••••**, eating, drinking, and accompanying. Hence the above statement.)

*"Teach thy household humility."* For if he is humble, the members of his household are also humble, and the consequence then is that if a poor man comes to the door and asks: "Is your

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father at home?" they answer: "Yes, sir. Please walk in." As soon as he enters he finds a set table, and eats and drinks, and blesses heaven for the enjoyment afforded him." When, however, one is not humble, and the members of his household are irascible, the outcome then is that if a poor man asks: "Is your father at home?" they answer harshly: "No," and assail the poor man with angry and menacing words.

Others take the words: "Teach the members of thy household humility," to mean this: When a man is humble and the members of his household are also so, the result is that when he has to go away to countries on the other side of the sea, he says: "I thank thee, Lord my God, that my wife is at peace with her neighbors"; and so his mind is tranquil when he is away from home. But when one is not humble and the members of his household are irascible, it follows that when he has to go away to countries on the other side of the sea he has to pray: "May it be Thy will, Lord my God, that my wife shall not quarrel with her neighbors, and my children shall not quarrel among themselves"; his heart is always trembling and his mind is restless until he returns. It has been said: "And prolong not converse with a woman." It means not even with his own wife, much less with the wife of his neighbor; for he who holds much discourse with a woman causes evil to himself, neglects the teaching of the Law, and finally he is doomed to Gehenna.

Another explanation of the above saying is, that when one enters the house of learning and is not treated with the honor due to him, or has a quarrel with his neighbor, he should not inform his wife of what took place, for in informing her he disgraces himself, and so also his neighbor; and his wife, who has heretofore respected him, will now laugh at him. When his neighbor hears of this, he says: Woe to me, words which were strictly between him and me, he revealed to his wife. The consequence of this is that he degrades himself, his wife, and his neighbor.

MISHNA *F.* Joshua b. Pera'hia and Nithai the Arbelite received from them. The former used to say: "Get thee a wise teacher, acquire a comrade, and judge every one by his good qualities (*i.e.*, from his favorable side)."

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1"Get thee a wise teacher." This means that one should procure a constant teacher of whom he should learn the Scripture, Mishna, Midrash, Halakhoth, and Agadoth. What he has left unexplained in the Scripture, he will finally explain in the Mishna, what is unexplained in the Mishna will be explained in the Halakha, and what is unexplained in the latter will be explained in the Agadah. The consequence of all this is, that one acquires all he desires in his own place and is full of blessings.

R. Meir used to say: One that learns the Torah of one teacher, may be compared to one who has one field, part of which he sowed with wheat and part with barley; in one part he planted olives, and in another fruit-trees. And so this man acquires wealth and blessings. The one, however, who studies under two or three masters is to be compared to one who has many fields: in one he sows wheat, in another barley; in one he plants olives, and in the other fruit-trees. And so this man has to go from place to place in many countries, and has no enjoyment of his wealth.

It is said: "Win a friend." How is a friend won? This is to teach us that a man has to acquire an associate with whom he should eat, drink, read, learn, and sleep; to whom he should reveal his secrets, the secrets of the Torah, and the secrets of every-day life. The good to accrue from such an intimacy is that, if one of them should blunder in the recital of a traditional law or in the division of chapters, or one should declare anything which is unclean as clean, and *vice versa*, and anything which is prohibited as permissible, and *vice versa*, his associate will correct him. How do we know that, if the associate really turns his attention to the mistake and sets him right, both will be rewarded greatly for their good endeavor? We learn it from the biblical passage which reads [Eccl. iv. 9]: "Two are better than one"; that is to say, the efforts of both will be crowned with success.

When three are sitting and studying the Law together, the Holy One, blessed be His name, accounts it to them as if they had formed a league for His praise, as it is written: "He that buildeth in the heavens his palace and established on earth his

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tabernacle." From this passage thou art to learn that if three sit and study together it is accounted to them as if they constituted a league to glorify the Holy One, blessed be He.

When two persons are studying the Law together their reward will be received above, as it is written [Mal. iii. 16]: "Then conversed they that fear the Lord one with the other: and the Lord listened and heard it," etc. But what is meant by the words: "They that fear the Lord? That when they have made up their mind to redeem the captives and release the prisoners, and the Holy One, blessed be He, has given them the opportunity to do so, they embrace it at once. What is meant by the words: "And for those who think after his name"? 1 They whose thought of doing the above-mentioned great things never ripens into firm resolution, but are doubtful in the Lord whether they will succeed, and therefore the Lord gives them not the opportunity, and they are lost before doing anything they thought of doing. Also an individual who engages in the study of the Law, his reward is marked in Heaven, as it is written [Lam. iii. 28]: "That he sit in solitude because he hath laid it upon him." This is illustrated by the following anecdote: A man had a little son whom he left alone when he went to attend to some business. The boy, instead of

spending his time in play, took a scroll and spread it upon his knees, and thus he sat and studied. When his father returned and found his son in that commendable position, he joyfully said: "See what my little son has done! Left alone, he took to study of his own accord. Even so the Almighty regards an individual who is absorbed in holy thought. His reward is marked in Heaven.

*"Judge everyone from his favorable side."* It happened that a girl was led in captivity, and two pious men went to redeem her. One of them entered into a house of harlots. When he came out again, he said to his companion: "What were thy suspicions of me (when you saw me enter this house)?" He said: "I thought you went to investigate what sum her ransom would be." He answered: "I assure you that so it was. As thou hast judged me from my favorable side, so may the Lord judge thee in the same manner."

It happened, again, that a maiden was led into captivity, and two pious men went to redeem her. One of them was suspected

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as a robber, and was confined in prison, and his wife brought him food and water every day. One day he asked her: "Go to my companion and tell him that I am in prison because I went to redeem the maiden in question, and he who intended to take part in it is doing nothing and pays no attention to her." She rejoined: "Thou art in prison, and thou think about foolish things?" She therefore did not listen to him. He again requested her to go and to notify his companion, and finally she did so. What did this man do? He took gold and silver, and, accompanied by other people, came and released them both. When he was released he said: "Let this maiden sleep with me 1 in bed with her clothes on." In the morning he said: "Let me go and dip (in a legal bath), and let her do the same." They did so. He then said to them: "Of what did ye suspect me when I went to dip myself?" They answered: "We thought that in all the days thou wast in prison thou wert hungry and thirsty, and now, when thou hast seen fresh air, thou hast grown hot and perhaps thou hast become *Keri*." "And what did ye suspect when she was dipped?" They answered: "We thought that in all the time that she was in prison among the idolaters, she was compelled to eat and drink with them, and you therefore ordered her to dip for the purpose of purification." He then rejoined: "I assure you such was the case, and as you have judged me favorably, so may the Lord judge you."

Not only were the upright people of former times themselves very strict and particular, but also their cattle were so. There is a tradition that the camels of Abraham our father never entered a place where there were idols, as it is written [Gen. xxiv. 31]: "While I have cleaned the house, and room for the camels." The first part of this passage relates that he cleared the house from Teraphim; but what is meant by the second part, which seems to be superfluous? Infer from this, that the camels did not enter the abode of Laban the Aramite until all the idols were cleared away.

It happened that the ass of R. Hanina b. Dosa was stolen by robbers. They tied him in the yard, and put straw, barley, and water before him; but he neither ate nor drank. They said then: "If we leave him here, he will die and infect the yard." Therefore they opened the gate and let him out, and he went on rejoicing until he reached the place of R. Hanina b. Dosa.

When the latter's son heard his voice, he said to his father: "Is not the voice of this ass similar to that of ours?" He rejoined: "My son, hasten to open the gate for him, or else he will die of hunger." He did so; he put food and water before him, and he fed and drank. Hence the above saying: "In former times the upright men were pious, so were their cattle."

MISHNA G. Nithai the Arbelite was accustomed to say: "Keep aloof from a wicked neighbor, associate not with a sinner, and never consider thyself exempt from God's chastisement."

*Tosephtha--Aboth of R. Nathan.*

1"*Keep aloof from a wicked neighbor.*" This means any bad neighbor in the house, or outside, or in the field. "In the house," because plagues come only in the house of the wicked, as it is written [Prov. v. 22]: "His own iniquities will truly catch the wicked." Infer from this, that the plagues come only for the sins of the wicked. The sins of the wicked have caused the demolition of the wall of the upright. For instance, if leprosy breaks out on the wall of the house of the wicked, which is also the wall of the adjoining house of the upright, the entire wall must be demolished. Hence the wall of the upright is demolished for the sins of the wicked. That is what R. Ishmael, son of R. Johanan b. Brokah, said: "Woe to the wicked, and woe to his neighbors."

With ten trials have our ancestors tried the Holy One, blessed be He, but they were punished only for one of them, which is calumny. They are as follows: One at the sea, one at the beginning of the manna period and one at the termination of it, one at the first and last appearance of quails, and at Marah, at Rephidim, one at Horeb, one on the occasion of the golden calf, and one when they sent spies. That of the spies was the hardest of all, as it is written [Numb. xiv. 22]: "And (they) have tempted me these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice." It is also written [ibid., ibid. 37]: "Even those men that had brought up the evil report of the land died by the, plague before the Lord." From this is drawn an *a fortiori* conclusion:

[paragraph continues] If on account of the land, which has no mouth to talk with, no countenance and no shame, the Holy One, blessed be He, punished the spies who made it suffer, how much the more reason is there for the Holy One, blessed be He, to avenge the suffering of one who has been slandered and put to shame by his neighbor.

R. Simeon said: Slanderers are punished with plagues, for we find that Aaron and Miriam, who slandered Moses, were stricken with plagues, as it is written [ibid. xii. 1]: "And Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses." Why is Miriam mentioned before Aaron? Infer from this, that Miriam made the beginning. (How so?) What she had heard from Zipporah [the wife of Moses] she told to Aaron, and they both spoke against this upright man; therefore plagues came upon them, as it is written [ibid. xii. 9]: "And the anger of the Lord was kindled against *them*, and he went away." For what purpose is it written: "and *he* went away"? To intimate that the anger was removed from Aaron, and placed upon Miriam, because Aaron did not go into such details of the matter as did Miriam; therefore she was punished more. Miriam said: "Although I have not separated myself from my husband, still the Lord has spoken to me." Aaron said: "The word of the Lord came to me, although I have not separated myself from my wife; and also to our



ancestors came the word of the Lord, although they were not separated from their wives; but he (Moses) who is too proud in his mind separated himself from his wife." Furthermore, they judged him not in his presence but in his absence, and by a mere supposition. From this draw an *a fortiori* conclusion: If Miriam, who had spoken against her brother (secretly), and not in his presence, was so severely punished, how much severer must be the punishment of a common person who speaks against his neighbor in his presence and shames him.

[At that time Aaron said to Moses: "Moses, my brother, dost thou think that the leprosy is placed on Miriam's flesh only, it is also on the flesh of our father Amram." This is to be compared to one who takes a live coal in his hand, and even if he keeps on turning it from one place to another, still every place it touches is blistered (and as Miriam is the flesh and blood of our father, the leprosy afflicts also his flesh), as it is written [ibid., ibid. 12]: "Let her not be as a dead-born child." At the same time, Aaron began to appease Moses, saying: "Moses, my brother, have we ever injured anybody in the world?" He

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said: "No, you have not." "Now then," he said, "if we have,, not injured anybody else, how could we intend to do an injury to our own brother? But what can we do? Shall, through this error, our brotherly covenant be abolished, and our own sister be lost?" Then Moses made a circle, entered in it, and prayed for his sister and said: "I will not stir from here till she be healed," as it is written [ibid., ibid. 13]: "O God, do thou heal her, I beseech thee." The Holy One, blessed be He, then said to Moses: "If a human king would rebuke her, or her own father would do this to her, would she not be ashamed seven days? Now if I, who am the King of the kings of kings, rebuke her, were it not proper that she should be ashamed fourteen days? Yet for thy sake I will forgive her," as it is written [ibid., ibid. 14]: "If her father had spit in her face," etc.

"But the man Moses was very meek" [ibid., ibid. 3]. Shall we assume that he was meek, but not beautiful and praised? Is it not written [Ex. xl. 19]: "And he spread the tent over the tabernacle"? As the Tabernacle was ten ells in height, so was Moses. Shall we assume that he was as meek as the angels, since it is written [Numb. xii. 3]: "More so than any man"? Consider that man is said, but not angels. Perhaps you think that he would have been considered meek in the former generation. Mark that it is written [ibid.]: "Upon the face of the earth," implying only his own generation. [But what is meant by "he was meek"? . . . There are three kinds of leprous people: moist, dry, and *polypous* (ulcer in the nose), yet Moses was humbler than the afflicted.]

R. Simeon b. Elazar said: Leprosy comes also for the sin of slander, as we find in the case of Gehazi, who slandered his master, and was so punished, as it is written [II Kings, V. 27]: "May then the leprosy of Naaman cleave unto thee . . . and he went out from his presence a leper, (white) as snow."

He also used to say that leprosy came upon those who were haughty, for so we find in the case of Uzziyahu, as it is written [II Chron. xxvi. 16-19]: "His heart was lifted up to his destruction, unfaithful against the Lord his God, and went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar of incense. And there went in after him . . . the leprosy even broke out on his forehead." At this time the Temple was split for a distance of twelve square miles, and the priests hurried out. "And he also made haste to go out, because the Lord had afflicted him. And he was a leper until the day of his death, and dwelt

in the leper-house as such; for he was excluded from the house of the Lord, and Jotham his son was over the king's house, (and) judged the people of the land" [ibid. 20, 21].

*"And thou shalt not associate with a sinner."* By this is meant, that one should not attach himself to a bad or wicked man, as we find with King Jehoshaphat, who became attached to Ahab and went up with him to Ramoth-Gilead, and there was a wrath over him from before the Lord. The same was the case when he became a party to King Ahazyahu, with whom he made ships in 'Ezyon-geber, which the Lord broke down, as it is written [II Chron. xx. 37]: "Because thou hast connected thyself with Ahazyahu, the Lord hath broken down thy work. And the ships were wrecked." And so we find with Amnon, who associated with Jonadab, and received from him wicked advice, as it is written [II Sam. xiii. 3]: "But Amnon had a friend whose name was Jonadab, the son of Shim'ah, David's brother; and Jonadab was a very sensible man--sensible in wickedness, as it is written [Jer. iv. 22]: "Wise are they to do evil." According to others, it is meant that one shall not associate with the wicked, even to study the Torah.

*"Do not consider thyself exempt from God's chastisement."* How so? One should always fear in his heart every day lest affliction come on him to-day or to-morrow, for thus it is written about Job [Job, iii. 25]: "What I greatly dreaded," etc. Another explanation of it is: If one sees that he is successful in all that he undertakes, he should not say: "I deserve it all; the Lord gives me food and drink (as interest), and the principal remains for the world to come"; but he shall be afraid and think: "Perhaps I possess but one desert and all the reward for it is given to me in this world, so that I have no claim in the world to come."

MISHNA H. Jehudah b. Tobai and Simeon b. Shata'h received from them. The former was wont to say: "Make not thyself as those that predispose the judges, 1 and while the litigants stand before thee let them be in thine eyes as guilty; and when dismissed from before thee let them

be in thine eyes as righteous, because that they have received the verdict upon them."

Simeon b. Shata'h used to say: "Interrogate the witnesses very closely, and be careful with thy words, lest they be put by them on the track of falsehood."

*Tosephtha--Aboth of R. Nathan.*

1"*Make thyself not as those that predispose the judges.*" Learn from this, that when entering a college and hearing there a saying or a Halakha, thou shalt not be hasty in answering, but sit and think over the reason why they have said so [and from what sources they derived such judgment; also investigate about which Halakha they were questioned, and also consider the time when it happened]. When two litigants come before thee for judgment, one of whom is poor and the other rich, say not: "How shall I declare the poor innocent, and the rich guilty, or *vice versa*? If I declare one of them guilty, he will become my enemy"; neither say: How shall I take away one's money and give it to the other? for the Torah said [Deut. i. 17]: "Ye shall not

respect persons in judgment."

According to others, for what purpose is the following passage written: "The small as well as the great shall ye hear" [ibid.]? That means that both litigants shall receive the same treatment: one shall not be allowed to sit down while the other is standing, or one shall not be allowed to plead at length while the other shall be directed to be short in his pleading.

Said R. Jehudah: "I have heard say that it is not forbidden to have *both* litigants sit down (at the hearing), but what *is* forbidden is, to allow *one* to sit down while the other *one* is directed to be standing," etc. From the above passage is to be inferred that the treatment must be alike, even if one of the litigants is a great man. The case of a common man shall be as carefully considered as that of a great man. The lawsuit of a very small amount shall receive the attention of a lawsuit of a great sum of money.

He also used to say: Whoever would have told me before I had entered this great position, "Enter," I would have challenged him, and now that I am the incumbent hereof, should anybody dare to tell me to abandon it, I would be of a mind to

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throw at his head a kettle of boiling water, for there is a difficulty in the ascent, but when one has reached the top, it is as hard for him to descend. So we find it was with Saul, that when he was told to ascend the throne he hid himself, as it is written [I Sam. X. 22]: "And the Lord said, Behold, he hath hidden himself among the vessels"; but when told to give up the crown, he followed David even to take his life.

Simeon b. Shata'h said: Examine the witnesses very closely, but while thou art so doing, be careful with thy words on account of the deceivers. Thy words may give them the clue to lying.

MISHNA I. Shemayah and Abtalion received from them. The former was in the habit of saying: "Love work and hate to attain superiority, and see to it that your name be not known to the government." [1](#)

*Tosephtha--Aboth of R. Nathan.*

[2](#)"Love work." How so? That is, one should love work; at all events, he ought not to hate it, for as the Torah was given in a covenant, so was labor, as it is written [Ex. xx. 9, 10]: "Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath in honor of the Lord thy God."

Said R. Aqiba: There comes a time when one does his work, and thereby escapes death; and on the other band there comes a time when one does no work, and incurs the penalty of death by heaven. How so? One who is idle the whole week and has nothing to eat on the eve of Sabbath, but having in his possession consecrated money misappropriates it for his own use, incurs the penalty of death by heaven; but if he was making repairs in the Temple, and is paid with consecrated money and uses it, he escapes the death penalty.

R. Dostai said: "How can it happen that one who did no work all the six days shall finally be compelled to labor all seven days? Strange as this appears, yet it may happen. For instance, a man who did no work during the week, Friday comes

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and he has nothing to eat. He starts to look for work, but is seized by conscription officers, who, holding him by an iron chain, compel him to make up on Sabbath for what he neglected during the six days."

R. Simeon b. Elazar said: Even Adam the First tasted nothing before he performed some work, as it is written [Gen. ii. 15]: "And put him into the garden of Eden, to, till it and to keep it"; and afterward he was commanded: "Of every tree in the garden thou mayest freely eat" [ibid., ibid. 16].

R. Tarphon said: Even the Holy One, blessed be He, rested not His Shekhina in the midst of Israel before some work was performed by them, as them is; written [Ex. xxv. 9]: "And they shall *make* me a sanctuary; and I will dwell in the midst of them."

Rabbi Jehudah b. Bathyra said: What shall one do who is without work? (Let him seek it, and he will find it.) Let him see whether there is no demolition in his Yard or field, and employ himself in that manner, as it is written [ibid. xx. 9]: "Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work." Wherefore is it said, "And do all thy work"? R. Tarphon said: One is doomed to death only through idleness. R. Jose the Galilean explained (the saying of R.. Tarphon) thus: If one through idleness stood upon the edge of a roof, castle, or building, or upon the edge of a river and fell down and died, his death was caused through idleness.

R. Nathan said: Moses worked at the Tabernacle without consulting the princes of Israel, who right along thought that at any moment he might solicit their coöperation. When they heard the voice which went throughout the camp proclaiming that the material prepared was sufficient for all the work, they cried: "Woe to us, that we have not participated in the work of the holy Tabernacle." They, therefore, rose and added a great thing of their own accord, as it is written [Ex. xxxv. 27]: "And the princes brought the onyx stones."

"*Do not care for superiority.*" It means that one must not place the crown merited by him upon his own head, but should let others do it, as it is written [Prov. xxvii. 2]: "Let another man praise thee, and not thy own mouth; a stranger, and not thy own lips."

R. Aqiba said: One that makes himself superior to the Law is compared to a putrefied carcass which lies in the road, so that every passer-by puts his hand to his; nose and hastens away, as it is written [Prov. xxx. 32]: "If thou hast become

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degraded by lifting up thyself, or if thou hast devised evil, put thy hand to thy mouth." Said Ben Azai to him: The sense of this passage seems to be thus: One who degrades himself for the sake of the Law, and eats decayed dates, and dresses in worn-out clothes, and is watching at the door of the sages, the passers-by call him an idiot, but be sure that in the end it will be found that he

is full of knowledge. This is what people say: One who makes himself superior to the Law will finally be put down, and one who lowers himself for the sake of the Law will finally be greatly elevated.

*"And see to it that your name be not known to the government."* One should not have the ambition to be prominent among government officials, otherwise they will become jealous of him, slay him, and confiscate his property. Neither shall one proclaim his neighbor's name to the government; that is, one shall not say: "May the Lord protect so and so, from whose house to-day went out a hundred oxen, a hundred ewes, and a hundred goats," etc., as it may happen that just at that time the officer passes by and hears this and reports it to his chief, and the latter surrounds his house and takes away all he has. As to this, the following passage applies [Prov. xxvii. 14]: "When one saluteth his friend with a loud voice . . . it will be counted a curse to him." According to others, the word *Rashuth* means not the government but publicity, and the passage is to be construed thus: If one's friends say publicly in the market: "May God protect so and so; to-day he brought into his house many measures of wheat and barley," etc., etc., robbers may hear of it and come in the night, surround the house, and take away all he possesses, and in the morning he has nothing left. Of him it is said in Scripture: "When one saluteth his friend with a loud voice," etc.

Others, again, say that it means the government, and the expression "he shall not announce," etc., means one shall not endeavor to be a solicitor for the governor of the city or his vice, for they rob the money of Israel.

Still another explanation is: One shall not seek any governing power, for although in the beginning it appears very pleasing, in the end he will find it very burdensome.

MISHNA I. Abtalion was wont to say: "Ye wise, be guarded in your words; lest you load upon yourselves

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the penalty of exile and be exiled to the place of evil waters; and the disciples that come after you may drink and die, and the name of Heaven be profaned."

*Tosephtha--Aboth of R. Nathan.*

*"Ye wise men, be guarded in your words."* Perhaps they will decide something in your name which will not be according to the teachings of Law, and ye will become liable to the punishment of exile, and be banished to a place where the water is bad. What is meant by "bad water"? It is permissible to say that it has reference to the vices of that place, as it is written [Ps. xvi. 35]: "And they will mingle with the nations and will learn their doings." Some think that it is to be taken literally. Others, however, think that it refers to hard labor.

MISHNA K. Hillel and Shammai received from them. Hillel said: "Be a disciple of Aaron, love peace, pursue peace, love all men too, and bring them nigh unto the Law."

*Tosephtha--Aboth of R. Nathan.*

1"*Love peace.*" How so? One should love to see peace in Israel and peace everywhere, as Aaron loved peace, about whom it is written [Mal. ii. 6]: "The love of truth was in his mouth, and falsehood was not found on his lips; in peace and equity he walked with me, and many did he turn away from iniquity." When Aaron went on the highway and met a wicked man, he bade him peace in the customary form of salutation. The result was that that man reformed. For when he was about to commit a sin, he remembered that Aaron the high-priest saluted him, and would say: "Woe, if I sin, how will I dare to raise my eyes and look Aaron in the face, who was so friendly to me?" and thus he is prevented from sin.

Likewise, when two men quarrelled with each other (and it came to the ears of Aaron), he went to one of them and said: "My son, see what thy neighbor does. He beats his breast, tears his clothes and cries, saying: 'Woe is me! How will I dare to lift up my eyes to look my neighbor in the face? I am

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ashamed of myself, for it is I who wronged him.'" Thus Aaron allayed the bitterness of that man's feeling. Then Aaron went to the other man and addressed him in the same style, and likewise pacified his heart. When those two men met, they no longer eyed one another as enemies, but embraced and kissed each other, as friends do. Because of Aaron's peace-making, it is written about him [Numb. xx. 29]: "They wept for Aaron thirty days."

The passages about the mourning of Moses and Aaron are differently written. About Aaron it is written "even *all* the house of Israel," which includes also women; about Moses, however, it is written only, "and the children of Israel," which excludes women. To explain this, there are different opinions. Some say because Moses, who was a true judge and judged justly without favoritism, used to rebuke the sinner and say to him: Thou hast sinned in so and so. Aaron, however, when judging them, judged them truly, but at the same time he did not rebuke them, even when the sinners were males, much less when, they were females. And, secondly, many thousands were named Aaron, after the high-priest. For were it not for Aaron they, would not have been brought to the world at all, as Aaron's special efforts were directed toward making peace between man and Wife, so that if, after that, a child was born to them they named him after their peace-maker.

According to others, the reason why even all the house of Israel wept is because they had seen Moses our master sitting and weeping, and who then would not weep? And they also saw Elazar and Pinechas, who were high-priests, weeping, and who would not weep with them?

Then Moses desired to die the same death that Aaron died. Why so? Because it was said that Moses saw his bier decked out with great pomp and many divisions of angels lamenting over him. And although Moses never expressed that wish, but only thought so in his heart, the Holy One, blessed be He, granted him his desire, as it is written [Deut. xxxii. 50]: "And die in the mount whither thou goest up, and be gathered unto thy people; *as Aaron thy brother died* on Mount Hor." From this is to be inferred that Moses had a desire to die the death of Aaron.

At the time (when Moses was about to die), God said to the angel of death: "Go and bring unto me the soul of Moses." Coming to Moses, he demanded his soul. But Moses censured



the angel of death. He said to him: "Thou art not entitled to be where I am, and thou art asking of me my soul?" and Moses drove him away with degradation. At length the Lord said unto Moses: "Moses, Moses, thou hast lived long enough in this world, as thy share in the world to come has awaited thee ever since creation," as it is written [Ex. xxxiii. 21]: "And the Lord said, Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon the rock." Thereupon the Lord Himself took the soul of Moses and placed it under His throne, as it is written [I Sam. xxv. 29]: "Yet will the soul of my Lord be bound in the bond of life." And He took his soul with a kiss, as it is written [Deut. xxxiv. 5]: "Through the mouth of God." [1](#)

[Not merely the soul of Moses is placed under His throne, but all the souls of the righteous, as it is written: "Yet will the soul of my Lord be bound in the bond of life." Should one assume that the souls of the wicked are also hidden there, therefore it is written [I Sam. xxv. 29]: "And the soul of thy enemies will he hurl away, as out of the middle of the sling."

For the better understanding of this, let us think of who puts a stone in his sling: although he hurls it from one place to another, he knows not where it will finally land. So are the souls of the wicked: they are wandering and hovering in the world without rest.

After the death of Moses the Lord again commanded the angel of death to bring Him the soul of Moses. He went to the place where he used to be found when alive, but did not find him. He then went to the ocean, and asked whether Moses was there. It answered: Since the day when the Israelites passed through me, I have not seen him. He went to the mountains and hills, and put to them the same question, and they said: Since the day when the Israelites received the Law from Mount Sinai, we have not seen him. So he went to the nether world and place of perdition, and asked them the same question, and they said: We have heard of his name, but have never seen him. Finally, he inquired of the angels, and they said: "God (alone) understandeth her way, and he knoweth her place" [Job, xxviii. 23]. The Lord preserved him for a life in the world to come, and no creature knows where he is, as it is written [Job, xxviii. 20-22]: "But wisdom . . . a report of her." At the same time Joshua was sitting and grieving

because he did not know where his master was, till the Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: Joshua, do not grieve. My servant Moses is dead.]

"*Pursue peace.*" How so? One shall be a pursuer of peace in Israel among all kinds of people. If a man remains in his place silent, he cannot be a pursuer of peace. But what shall he do? He should leave his place in search of peace, as it is written [ibid.]: "Seek peace, and pursue it." Which means, seek it in thy place, and if thou canst not find it, pursue it in another.

The Holy One, blessed be He, also made peace in heaven, in that he did not name ten angels Gabriel, Michael, Uriel, or Raphael, as, for instance, many people bear the same name; otherwise, when He would summon one of them, they would all respond, and be jealous of one another. Therefore He gave each one a separate name. When He summons one, only that one comes, and He sends him wherever He desires. They reverence and respect one another, and are meeker than human beings, for when they begin to sing the praises of the Lord, one says to

another: "Begin thou, as thou art greater than I am"; and the other says: "Thou art greater than I am, and therefore begin thou." With human beings, however, it is the reverse. Every one says: "I am greater than thou art." Some say that not individual angels, but divisions of angels, say to each other: "Begin ye, ye are greater than we are," as it is written [Is. vi. 3]: And one called unto the other and said."

*"Love all men too."* That is to say, that one should love all men, and not hate them; for so we find with the men of the "generation of the division," because they loved each other, the Lord was reluctant to destroy them, but only scattered them to all four corners of the world. The men of Sodom, however, because they hated each other, were annihilated by the Lord, both in this and the world to come, as it is written [Gen. xiii. 13]: "But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly. "And sinners" implies that they were guilty of illegal unions; "before the Lord" implies that they were guilty of desecration of the Holy name; "and exceedingly," that they sinned wilfully.

*"And bring them nigh unto the Law."* How so? One should try to uplift 1 people and bring them under the wings of

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the Shekhina, as our father Abraham did; and not only Abraham, but also Sarah, as it is written [Gen. xii. 5]: "And Abraham took Sarah his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had acquired, and the persons that they *made 1* in Charan." Is it possible? Even all mankind combined could not create even a small insect. We must, therefore, say that the Lord considered the people that they brought under the wings of the Shekhina as if they had made them.

As one cannot divide his life with his neighbor in this world, so he cannot divide with him his deserved reward in the world to come, as it is written [Eccl. iv. 1]: "And, behold, there are the tears of the oppressed, and they have no comforter; and from the hand of their oppressors they suffer violence, and they have no comforter." Why is it written "and they have no comforter" twice? To infer that, although there are men who eat (plentifully), drink, and are successful with their sons and daughters in this world, they may have nothing in the world to come, and they will have no comforter there. In this world, when something is stolen from one, or a death occurs in one's family, his son, brother, and other relatives come and console him, but this cannot be done in the world to come, as it is written [ibid., ibid. 8]: "Yea, he hath neither son nor brother."

The same is the case with one who has begotten an illegitimate son; for the latter may say to him: "Scoundrel, thou hast lost thyself as well as me." For the bastard may have a thirst for knowledge, and therefore desire to study the Law in Jerusalem together with the other disciples, but cannot do so because, being a bastard, he is prohibited from entering Jerusalem. It happened once that a bastard was not allowed to pass Ashdad, as it is written [Zech. ix. 6]: "And bastards shall dwell in Ashdad, and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines."

MISHNA L. He also used to say: "A name made great is a name destroyed; he who increases not, decreases; and he who will not learn from his masters is not worthy to live; and he who uses his knowledge as a tiara perishes."

MISHNA M. He also used to say: "If I do not look

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to myself, who will do so? But if I look only to myself, what am I? And if not now, when?"

*Tosephtha--Aboth of R. Nathan.*

"*He used to say: 'If I do not look to myself, who will do so?'*" (That is), if I cannot reach any reward while I am alive, who can reach it for me after my death?

"*And if not now, when?'*" (That is), if I can do nothing for myself while I am alive, who can do it for me after my death? So also said Ecclesiastes [ix. 4]: "For a living dog fareth better than a dead lion." By "a living dog" is meant a wicked person who exists in this world, and "than a dead lion" refers to all the righteous, who are highly received in the world to come, including even the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The living dog, that is, a wicked man who is still alive, fareth better is accepted by the Holy One, blessed be He, when he repents and becomes virtuous and receives a share in the world to come, while a dead lion cannot add aught to his good deeds after he is dead. The same, used to say: "If thou wilt come to my house," etc. (See Section Moed, Vol. vii.; Succah, pp. 83, 84.)

It happened that Hillel the First, while on a journey, met men carrying wheat. He inquired how much was a saah, and was told two dinars. Afterward he met others, who gave him the price of the same as three dinars. He said: "Did not the first men say it was only two dinars?" They rejoined: "Thou foolish Babylonian, dost thou not know that the reward is according to the trouble?" (They came from a farther distance.) But he said: "Is that your answer to my civil question?" Finally he succeeded in making them gentle and accommodating.

He also used to say four things in the Babylonian dialect:

"*A name made great is a name destroyed.*" It means, a man shall not desire to have his name proclaimed to the government, for the reason stated above, p. 45.

"*And he who does not desire to learn from his masters.*" It was said that it happened to an inhabitant of Beth Ramah who adopted the customs of the pious, and Rabban Johanan b. Zakkai sent one of his disciples to examine him. He found him occupied in heating oil on a range and then pouring it into peeled grain. On being questioned what he was doing, he answered, I am careful with the heave-offering, to eat it in its

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purity, just as if I were a high-priest. Then he asked again: Is this range clean or unclean? He rejoined: Do we then find anywhere in the Torah that a range can be unclean? An oven only is mentioned, as it is written [Lev. xi. 33]: "Whatsoever is in it shall be unclean." Then the disciple again rejoined: The law of the oven applies also to the range, as it is written [ibid., ibid. 35]: "An oven or range shall be broken down, they are unclean." The same added: If such was thy habit,

thou hast never in thy life eaten clean heave-offerings.

"*He who increases not, decreases.*" How so? If one has learned one, two, or even three treatises, and has not added anything thereto, he will finally forget even that.

"*And he who serves himself with the tiara perishes.*" Any one that uses the name of the Lord, as it is written, which is prohibited, has no share in the world to come.

MISHNA *N.* Shammai was in the habit of saying: "Fix a time for study; promise little, and do much receive every one with friendly countenance."

MISHNA *O.* Rabban Gamaliel said: "Make to thyself a master, and free thyself of doubt, and tithe not much by estimation."

MISHNA *P.* Simeon his son was wont to say: "All the days of my life have been passed among the sages, and I have never found anything better for a man than silence; and the discussion of the law is not of such import as is the practice thereof. He who talks much, cannot avoid sin."

MISHNA *Q.* He also said: "Three things support the world--law, truth, and peace--as it is written [Zechariah, viii. 16]: "Truth and the judgment of peace, judge ye in your gates."

#### *Tosephtha--Aboth of R. Nathan.*

1"*Fix a time for study,*" etc. It means, when one has heard something from a sage in the college, he shall not treat it as something unessential, but as a standard saying to be studied

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diligently, and what he learns from the wise he shall teach it to others, as it is written [Deut. v. 1]: "That ye may learn them, and that ye may observe to do them." And also of Ezra it is first written [vii. 10]: "For Ezra had directed his heart to inquire in the law of the Lord, and to do it." And immediately after it is written [ibid.]: "And to teach in Israel statutes and ordinances."

"*Promise little, and do much.*" As such is the custom of the righteous, who promise little but do much; the custom of the wicked, however, is to promise much and do nothing. Whence do we know that the upright promise little, and do much? From Abraham our father, who said to the angels: "Ye will eat with me a morsel of bread," as it is written [Gen. xviii. 5]: "And I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your heart." But what did he in reality do? He prepared for them three oxen and nine saah of fine meal. And whence do we know that he baked for them nine measures of fine meal? From [ibid. 6]: "And Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah and said: Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal." "Three" is literal, "meal" is six, and "fine meal" is nine. And whence is it derived that he roasted for them three oxen? From the following [ibid., ibid. 7]: "And Abraham ran unto the herd," etc. "The herd" means one, "a calf" one, "tender" one. According to others it was four, because the word "good," which is added, is also counted as one. "And gave it unto a young man" [ibid.]. This means Ishmael his son, to accustom him to religious practice.

Also the Holy One, blessed be He, promised little and did much, as it is written [ibid. xv. 13, 14]: "And he said unto Abram, know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land which is not theirs, and they will make them serve, and they will afflict them four hundred years. And also that nation whom they shall serve, will I judge; and afterward shall they go out with great substance." He promised him with • and • the numerical value of which is 54. But when the Lord at last avenged Himself on Israel's enemies, He did so with seventy-two letters (contained in verse 34, Deut. xxxiv.): 1 "Or hath a

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god essayed to go to take to himself a nation from the midst of a nation, by proofs, by signs, and by wonders . . . and by great terrors."

Whence is it derived that the wicked promise much and do nothing? From Ephron, who said to Abraham [Gen. xxiii. 15]: "A piece of land worth four hundred shekels of silver, what is that between me and thee?" Nevertheless, in the end he accepted the whole sum of the money, as it is written [ibid., ibid. 16]: "And Abraham understood the meaning of Ephron; and Abraham weighed out to Ephron the silver."

"*Receive every one with friendly countenance.*" How so? That means, that even if one presents to his neighbor the most precious things with bad grace, it is accounted to him in Scripture as if he had given nothing; but if one receives his neighbor with a friendly countenance, although he give him nothing, it is accounted to him in Scripture as if he had conferred upon him great favors.

*Tosephtha--Aboth of R. Nathan.*

1Rabban Johanan b. Zakkai received from Hillel and Shammai. Hillel the First had eighty disciples, thirty of whom were worthy that the Shekhina rest upon them as on Moses, but their generation was not deserving of it. Thirty others were worthy to institute the intercalary years, etc., etc. (Continued in Succah, pp. 36, 37.)

"*He used to say: 'If thou hast accumulated much knowledge, do not boast of it, for it is for that that thou wast created.'*"

There are five disciples of Rabbi Johanan b. Zakkai whom he characterized in the following manner: Eliezer b. Hyrcanus as "a plastered cistern which loseth not a drop"; Joshua b. Hananiah as "a threefold cord that cannot quickly be torn asunder"; Jose the priest as "the most pious in his generation"; Ishmael b. Hananiah as "a garden-bed in the desert which absorbs water"; and Elazar b. Arach he named "as a flowing brook and swelling spring whose waters rise and overflow abroad," as it is written [ibid. v. 16]: "So will thy springs overflow abroad; and in the open streets will be thy rivulets of water.

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"*I consider the judgment of R. Elazar b. Arach,*" etc. Happy is the disciple who receives from his master such a testimonial of praise and acknowledgment. When the son of Rabban Johanan b.

Zakkai died, his disciples came to console him. R. Eliezer entered first, sat down before him, and asked his permission to say something. The request having been granted, he said: "Adam the First accepted consolation when his son died. And whence do we find it so? It is written [Gen. iv. 25]: 'And Adam knew his wife *again*' ('again' means after this consolation). Thou also shouldst accept consolation." He rejoined: "Is not my own grief sufficient, that thou must remind me of that of Adam the First?"

Next entered R. Joshua, and also asked for permission to say something, which was granted, who then said: "Job, who had many sons and daughters, all of whom died in one day, yet he accepted consolation. As it is written [Job, i. 21]: 'The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; may the name of the Lord be blessed.'" He rejoined: "Is not my own grief sufficient, that thou remindest me of that of Job?"

Next entered R. Jose. He sat down before him and said: "Be it thy wish that I say something." And being encouraged by the sage, he continued: "Aaron had two full-grown sons, and both died on one day, yet he accepted consolation, as it is written [Lev. x. 3]: 'And Aaron held his peace,' which means that he was consoled. Would it not be right that thou shouldst do likewise?" The sage rejoined: "Have I not enough of my own grief? Why do you remind me of the grief of Aaron?"

Then entered R. Simeon, and said: "Rabbi, may I be favored by thee to say a word in thy august presence?" And the sage answered: "Proceed." Then the former said: King David had a son who died, and he received condolence. It well becomes thee to persuade thyself into comfort. As to King David, it is written [II Sam. xii. 24]: 'And David comforted Bathsheba his wife, and he went in unto her, and lay with her; and she bore a son, and called his name Solomon.'" He rejoined: "Is not my own grief sufficient, that you all remind me of the grief of others?"

Finally R. Elazar b. Arach entered, and when the master saw him he said to his servant: "Take a vessel and follow me to the bath-house; the man who is entering now is a great man, and I am sure that I could not withstand his arguments." He entered, sat down before him, and said: "I will entertain thee

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by telling a parable: A king had intrusted one of his subjects with a precious article. The man used to exclaim, weeping: 'Woe is me! When will I be relieved of this responsibility?' This, O Rabbi, is thy case. Thy son, who spent his time in sacred study, departed from the world sinless. What a comfort it ought to be to thee that thou hast returned the article intrusted to thy care intact!" Hereupon the sage said: "Elazar, my son, thou hast consoled me as people should console each other."

When they left him, Elazar said: "I will go to Damsith, which is a fine place with excellent waters"; and the other disciples said: "We will go to Jamnia, where there are many scholars, and love the study of Law." He that went to Damsith lost a good deal of his authority, but the names of those who went to Jamnia, the seat of great scholarship, became legion in learned circles.



1"*Thy fellow's honor must be as dear to thee as thine own.*" How so? As one watches over his own honor, so should he guard the honor of his neighbor, and as one is loath to see his own honor assailed, he should be so in regard to the honor of his neighbor.

Another explanation of the above is: When one is possessed of an hundred thousand, and all is taken away from him, he should keep his conscience clear even of the value of a small coin.

"*Do not allow thyself to be easily angered.*" That is, one should be as meek as Hillel the Elder, and not as irritable as Shammai the Elder. It is said about Hillel that two men once wagered the sum of four hundred zuz upon his patience; the one who could succeed to provoke his anger was to receive the amount. (See Sabbath, p. 50; the whole legend ending with): "Take care of thy temper. A Hillel is, worthy that twice that amount be lost through him; a Hillel must not get excited."

2What was the irascibility of Shammai the Elder? It was

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related that once a man came to Shammai and said: "Rabbi, how many Laws have you?" "Two Laws: the written and the oral Law." He answered: "I believe in the written, but not in the oral Law," said the man. But Shammai rebuked him, and drove him away.

The same man came to Hillel and said: "Rabbi, how many Laws were given?" And he told him two--the written and the oral. The man said: "I believe in the written, but not in the oral Law." And Hillel said: "Sit down, my son, and write for me the Aleph-Beth. After he did so, he asked him what the first letter was. "An Aleph," said the man. "It is not an Aleph, but a Beth," said Hillel. And he again asked him: "What is this?" And the man said: "A Beth." "It is not a Beth, but a Gimel," said Hillel. "Whence knowest thou that this is Aleph, the other a Beth, and the third a Gimel? Because it is a tradition of our forefathers, and whereas thou believest in one tradition, believe also in the other."

It happened that a Gentile passing by a synagogue heard a child reading: "And these are the garments which they shall make: a breastplate, and an ephod, and a robe" [Ex. xxviii. 4]. He came to Shammai and said: "Rabbi, to whom belongeth all that honor?" "To the high-priest who serves at the altar," was the answer. The Gentile then said: "Convert me, on the condition that I be made a high-priest." Said Shammai: "Are there no priests in Israel, or have we no high-priests, but that we should raise to this dignity this lowly stranger, who came to us but with his staff and knapsack?" He rebuked him, and drove him away.

He then came to Hillel with the same request, and the latter said: "Sit down, and I will tell thee something. If one is to appear before a human king, is it not demanded of him that he learn how to make his entrance and exit?" "It is so," said the Gentile. Then continued Hillel: "Thou, who art desirous of appearing before the King of kings of kings, how much more necessary for thee to learn how to enter the Holy of Holies, how to trim the lamps, how to approach the altar, how to order the table, and how to prepare the fire on the altar." The man then replied: "What seems right to thee?" So Hillel wrote for him the Aleph-Beth, and he learned it; then he instructed him in Leviticus, and he went on learning till he came to the passage: And the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death [Numb. i. 51]. Then he of himself made the following

deduction: If the people of Israel, who are called the children of the Lord, and of whom the Shekhina said [Ex. xix. 6]: "And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation," were so warned by Scripture, should not I, an insignificant stranger who has come merely with his knapsack, take the hint? Thus the stranger became reconciled of his own accord.

He came to Hillel the Elder and said: "All the blessings that are contained in the Torah shall rest upon thy head, for hadst thou been as Shammai the Elder, I would not have become as one of Israel. His irascibility came near causing me to be lost both in this world and the one to come; but the patience of Hillel has brought me to a life in this world and the one to come." It was said that to this proselyte were born two sons: he named one Hillel and the other Gamaliel, and they were called Hillel's proselytes.

"*Repent one day before thy death.*" The disciples of R. Eliezer asked him: "How can one know the day of his death, that he may then repent?" He answered: "For that very reason he should make every to-day a day of repentance"; that is, he should be repenting all his life.

R. Jose bar Jehudah said in the name of his father R. Jehudah bar Ilai, who said it in the name of Ilai, quoting R. Eliezer the Great: "Repent one day before thy death, and warm thyself before the light of the wise, but beware of their embers, perchance thou mayest be singed; for their bite is the bite of a fox, and their sting is the sting of a scorpion and *also* their words are as coals of fire."

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## Footnotes

[1:1](#) Chapter I. of the original.

[3:1](#) The Talmud infers this from the two words *shephot hashophetim*, which literally mean that the judges were judged. Hence, who have judged the judges? The elders.

[7:1](#) The translation of this passage is entirely different. The Talmud, however, interprets this to mean Adam the First, and takes it literally.

[11:1](#) Chapter II. of the original.

[12:1](#) In the ancient times, and even now in some places of the Orient, a woman in her separation must be separated and avoid all communication with anybody during the whole time.

[12:2](#) We have explained it in our "Philac. Ritus," that at that time only great men were allowed to bear phylacteries, and therefore she took them to prove that her husband was one of them.

[13:1](#) Leeser translates "against" the third day, but the Talmud translates it as we give it.

[16:1](#) There is a tradition in the Talmud that Malkizedek is identical with Shem. Salem in Hebrew means also "perfect." Hence the analogy.

[19:1](#) Chapter III. of the original.

[19:2](#) In a Mishna at the end of Tract Pëah it is stated the reverse, viz.: That one who needs charity and refuses to take it will not depart from this world until he will be in a position to give charity.

[20:1](#) This is inferred from the superfluous letter • and • as gates ••••," is also plural, not less than two, from the added • and • they deduce one more.

[21:1](#) We omitted the narrative of a pious man who was compelled too stay over night in a cemetery, as its proper place is in Berachoth.

[22:1](#) Chapter IV. of the original.

[25:1](#) Elsewhere the Talmud explains that Lebanon means the Temple, and "mighty one" a king.

[27:1](#) Chapter V. of the original.

[27:2](#) Chapter VI. of the original.

[28:1](#) According to this legend, R. Aqiba had a son before he married the daughter, of Calba Shebua, and thus can be explained the question of Tossaphat in Sabbath, old edition 106*b*, beginning with the paragraph, "R. Joshua b. Karcha."

[29:1](#) See Section Moed, Vol. VI., Tract Yomah, p. 49, that it is Hillel who will be a menace to the poor.

[32:1](#) *Calba*, means "dog"; *Shebua*, "satiated."

[32:2](#) Chapter VII. of the original.

[35:1](#) Chapter VIII. of the original.

[36:1](#) The Talmud translates •••• "think after" (doubt), but Leeser translates it "respect."

[37:1](#) He did so in order to prevent others from doing her violence.

[38:1](#) Chapter IX. of the original.

[41:1](#) The Hebrew term is *Kehorkhe Hadaionin*. This translation is according to Rashi. Maimonides explains it as follows: "Do not make thyself as those who instruct the litigants what to plead." The explanation, however, of the ancient sages will be found in the Gemara.

[42:1](#) Chapter X. of the original.

[43:1](#) *I.e.*, do not get into such affairs as will cause the government to investigate about you. The commentators, however, interpret this otherwise.--See Gemara.

[43:2](#) Chapter XI. of the original.

[46:1](#) Chapter XII. of the original.

[48:1](#) •• in Hebrew means "mouth," and the Talmud takes it literally.

[49:1](#) The Hebrew term for this is "Mekapeah," derived from "K'apah," *high* (Bechoroth, 45*b*).

[50:1](#) According to the interpretation of the Talmud, but Leeser translates "obtained."

[52:1](#) Chapter XIII. of the original.

[53:1](#) There are seventy-five letters in the Hebrew text beginning with the word •••• and ending with •••••, the translation of which is "go to take to himself a nation from the midst of a nation, by proofs, by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by an outstretched arm, and by great terrors." And in Midrash it is explained that one word, ••• of three letters is not counted, for it has reference to [p. 54](#) Egypt. Of the many commentaries upon this difficult and complicated passage this seems to us to be the best, which is according to Isaiah Berlin (Pick).

[54:1](#) Chapter XIV. of the original.

[56:1](#) Chapter XV. of the original.

[56:2](#) This is also stated in Sabbath, p. 51; but because it is here more in detail, we give it again.

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[Next: Chapter II.](#)