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CHAPTER VI.

[Wise men have taught in the Mishna tongue. Blessed is He that made choice of them and their Mishna.]

MISHNA A. R. Meir said: "Whosoever is busied in Torah for the love thereof merits many things; and not only so, but he is worth the whole world, as he is called friend, beloved, loves the Omnipotent and mankind; pleases the Omnipotent and mankind. And it clothes him with meekness and fear, and fits him to become righteous, pious, upright, and faithful; and removes him from sin, and brings him toward the side of merit. And they derive from him the benefit of good counsel, and sound wisdom, understanding, and strength, as it is written [Prov. viii. 14]: 'Mine are counsel and sound wisdom: I am understanding; mine is might.' And it gives him kingdom and dominion, and faculty of judgment. And they reveal to him secrets of Torah; and he is made, as it were, a spring that ceases not and as a river that flows on increasing. And he becomes modest and long-suffering, and forgiving of insult, and it magnifies him and exalts him over all things."

MISHNA B. Said R. Jehoshua b. Levi: "Every day a Heavenly voice goes forth from Mount Horeb, and proclaims as follows: 'Woe to the creatures for contempt of the Law, for whosoever does not occupy himself in the Law is called "blameworthy,"' as it is written [Prov. xi. 22]: 'As a golden ring in a swine's snout, so is a handsome woman that hath thrown off discretion'; and it is also written [Ex. xxxii. 16]: 'And the tables were the work of God, and the writing, was the writing of God, engraved (*charuth*) upon the tables.' Do not read *charuth*, graven,

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but *cheruth*, freedom, for there is no free man but him who is occupied in the study of the Law; as whosoever is occupied in such study, behold he exalts himself, as it is written [Numb. xxi. 19]: 'And from Mattanah to Nachaliël; and from Nachaliël to Barmoth.'"

MISHNA C. He who learns from his companion one chapter, or one Halakha, or one verse, or one word, or even one letter is bound to do him honor, for thus we find with David, King of Israel, who learned from Achitophel two things only, and nevertheless he named him his master, his guide, and his acquaintance, as it is written [Ps. lv. 14]: "But it is thou, a man my equal, my guide, and my acquaintance." And is there not an *a fortiori* conclusion to be drawn from this, that as David, King of Israel, who learned from Achitophel two things only, called him his master, his guide, and his acquaintance, he who learns from his companion one chapter, or one Halakha, or one verse, or even one letter is so much the more bound to do him honor? And honor is nothing but the Torah, as it is written [Prov. iii. 35]: "The wise shall inherit glory"; and also [ibid. xxviii. 10]: "But the men of integrity will inherit what is good"; and good is nothing but the Torah, as it is written [ibid. iv. 2]: "For good information do I give you, my teaching (Torah) must ye not forsake."

MISHNA D. This is the path of Torah: A morsel with salt shalt thou eat. Thou shalt drink also water by measure (Ezek. v. 11) and shalt sleep upon the ground, and live a life of painfulness, and in Torah shalt thou labor. If thou doest thus, "happy shalt thou be and it shall be well with thee" [Ps. cxxviii. 2]. "Happy shalt thou be" in this world, and "it shall be well with thee" in the world to come.

MISHNA E. Seek not greatness for thyself, and desire not honor. Practise more than thou learnest, and lust not for the table of kings, for thy table is greater than theirs, and thy crown greater than their crown, and faithful is

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thy taskmaster, who will pay thee the wage of thy work.

MISHNA F. Greater is Torah than the priesthood, and than the kingdom; for the kingdom is acquired by thirty degrees, and the priesthood by twenty-four, and the Torah is acquired by forty-eight. And these are they: by learning, by a listening ear, by orderly speech, by discernment of heart, by reverence, by fear, by meekness, by cheerfulness, by purity, by attendance upon the wise, by discussion with associates, by argumentation of disciples, by sedateness, by Scripture, by Mishna, by moderation of business, limitation of worldly things, by temperance in pleasure, by little sleep, by lessening converse, by reducing merriment, by long-suffering, by a good heart, by faith in the wise, by acceptance of chastisements; he that knows his place, and that rejoices in his portion, and that makes a face to his words, and does not claim merit to himself: he is loved, loves God, loves all creatures, loves righteousness, loves uprightness, loves reproofs, and retires from honor, and does not puff up his heart on account of his learning, and does not rejoice because he is privileged to give decision, bears the yoke with his associates, and inclines him to the scale of Merit, and grounds him upon the truth and upon peace, and concentrates his mind in study, asks and answers, hears and adds thereto; he that learns in order to teach, and learns in order to practise; that makes his master wiser, and that considers what he has heard, and tells a thing in the name of him that said it. Lo, thou hast learned that whosoever tells a thing in the name of him that said it brings redemption to the world, as it is written [Esther, ii. 22]: "And Esther said it to the king in the name of Mordecai."

Tosephtha--Aboth of R. Nathan.

1There are four things which bear good fruit in this world, and yield greater benefits for the world to come, if man observes

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them. They are honoring of parents, conferring favors, reconciliation of adversaries, and, above all, the study of the Law. There are four things for which one who is guilty of them is punished both in this and in the world to come; namely, idolatry, incest, shedding of blood, and, above all, slander.

A meritorious act has both principal and benefit, as it is written [Is. iii. 10]: "Say ye to the righteous, that be hath done well; for the *fruit* of their doings shall they eat." A transgression has principal but no benefit, as it is written [ibid. 11]: "Woe unto the wicked . . . for the *recompense*

of his hands," etc. According to others, transgressors have benefit, as it is written [Prov. i. 31]: "Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way," etc.

"One who causes many to be righteous, no sin prevails upon him." In order that he might not go to Gehenna, while his disciples will enjoy the world to come, as it is written [Ps. xvi. 10]: "For thou wilt not abandon my soul to the grave." On the other hand, *"One who causes others to sin is never afforded the faculty to repent"*--also for the reason that the reverse of the above shall not be the case, as it is written [Prov. xxviii. 17]: "A man oppressed by the load of having shed human blood will flee even to the pit."

One who says, "I will sin and then do repentance," is not afforded the opportunity to repent; "I will sin, and the Day of Atonement will atone for it," or, "I will sin, and the day of death will wipe it out"--it does not do so.

R. Elazar b. Jose says: "One who has sinned and repented, and thenceforward seeks to perfect himself, does not move from his place until he is forgiven; and one who says that he will sin and repent thereafter, he is forgiven only up to three times, and no more."

"There are four characters among men," etc. There are four characters among disciples: one who desires to teach and that others shall do likewise, he is of a good disposition; if he desires to teach, but does not like to see others do the same thing, he is of bad disposition. That others shall teach, and not he--this is medium. According to others, this is the character of Sodom (as the Sodomites did not want any one to derive any benefit from them). If, however, he wishes that neither he nor others shall teach, he is decidedly wicked.

There are four characters among those who sit in the house of learning. One who becomes friendly (with the sages who

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study there) and studies with them has a share (with the sages); one who befriends himself but does not study with them has no share; one who estranges himself (from the sages) but studies himself has a share; and the one who both estranges himself and does not study has no share.

One who propounds questions and gives their answers has a share (in the world to come); one who only questions has none; one who sits and keeps silent has a share. One who befriends himself in order that he might listen and learn has a share; if he befriends himself in order that others might say that he befriends himself and sits before a wise man, he has none. If he sits at a distance in order to accord honor to one who is superior to him, he has a share; if, however, the reason is that others might say that he does not need that sage, he has none. One that propounds questions and gives their answers in order that others might say that he propounds questions and gives their answers and serves the scholars, has no share; if, however, he does so in order really to learn something, he has. If he sits silent in order to listen and learn, he has a share; if, however, the purpose is that others might say that he does so, he has none.

"There are four different characters among students," etc. One resembles a sponge: as a sponge absorbs all liquids, so does that kind of student absorb all that he studies: Scripture, Mishnah, Midrash, Halakhoth, and Agadoth. One is like a sieve: as a sieve passes through the fine flour

and retains the coarse particles, so an intelligent student retains what is good in the study and leaves out what is not. One is like a funnel: as it lets in the liquid through one opening and lets it out through the other, so is it with the unintelligent student--what enters his one ear goes out through the other, until all is gone. The fourth student is like a wine-strainer which lets the wine pass through and absorbs the dregs: so also the wicked student forgets the good teachings and retains the bad ones.

R. Eliezer b. Jacob named the last one a horn (which lets in the liquids at one end and lets them out at the other). How so? For instance, a child who is given a pearl, he will drop the latter when given a slice of bread; and when given a potsherd he will drop the bread, and finally he has nothing but the potsherd.

As to disciples, R. Gamaliel the elder compares them to the following four kinds of fish: an unclean, a clean fish, a fish found

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in the Jordan, and one found in the Ocean. By an unclean fish is meant a disciple of poor intellect, who, notwithstanding his study of Scripture, Mishna, Halakhoth, and Agadoth, still remains poor-minded. By a clean fish is meant a disciple of rich intellect, who studies Scripture, Mishna, Halakhoth, and Agadoth, and develops his mind. By a fish from the Jordan is meant a scholar who has studied all the mentioned subjects, but has not acquired the faculty of answering questions put to him. And by a fish found in the Ocean is meant a scholar who studied all the above subjects and has the ability of answering the questions put to him.

With regard to sight, it may be said that there are four different misfortunes: those that see and are visible, *e.g.*, the wolf, the lion, the leopard, the bear, the hyena, the serpent, robbers, and soldiers (who in time of war commit robbery); those that are visible but do not see, *e.g.*, the sword, the arrow, the spear, the knife, the stick, the lance; those that see but are not visible, *e.g.*, the plague of an evil spirit; and those that neither see nor are visible, *e.g.*, the plague of stomach trouble.

There are four sages: One who sees R. Johanan b. Nuri in his dream may hope to be fearful of sin; R. Elazar b. Azariah--he may hope for riches and greatness; R. Ishmael--he may hope for wisdom; R. Aqiba--he may fear being chastised.

There are other three scholars (regarding dreams): One who sees Ben Azai may hope to be one of the pious; Ben Zoma--he may hope for knowledge; Elisha b. Abuyah--may fear being chastised.

(The same is the case) with the following three books of the prophets: Kings--he may hope for riches, greatness; Isaiah--satisfaction; and Jeremiah--chastisement.

(The same is the case) with the following books of the Hagiographa: Psalms--he may hope to be modest; Proverbs--he may hope for wisdom; and Job--he may fear being chastised.

There are also three things regarding the righteous and the wicked ones (which will be explained

in Tract Sanhedrin).

"*Every gainsaying,*" etc. Every assembly that is for the sake of performing a religious duty remains everlasting; *e.g.*, the Great Assembly. And every assembly which is not for such purpose will finally cease; *e.g.*, the assembly for division [Gen. xi.].

MISHNA G. Great is Torah, that gives life to those who practise it in this world and in the world to come, as

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it is written [Prov. iv. 22]: "For they are life unto every one of those that find them, and to all his body a healing." And it is also written [ibid. iii. 8]: "It will be healing to thy body, and marrow to thy bones." And it is again written [ibid., ibid. 18]: "A tree of life is she to those who lay hold on her, and every one that firmly graspeth her will be made happy." And again [ibid. i. 9]: "For a wreath of grace are they unto thy head, and chains for thy throat." And again [ibid. iv. 9]: "She will give to thy head a wreath of grace; a crown of ornament will she deliver to thee." And again [ibid. iii. 16]: "Length of days is in her right hand; in her left are riches and honor." And again [ibid. iii. 2]: "For length of days, and years of life, and peace, will they increase unto thee."

MISHNA H. R. Simeon b. Menassia said in the name of R. Simeon b. Jo'hai: "Comeliness, and strength, and wealth, and honor, and wisdom, and age, and hoariness, and sons are becoming to the righteous, and becoming to the world, as it is written [Prov. xvi. 31]: 'An ornamental crown is the hoary head, on the way of righteousness can it be found.' And it is also written [ibid. XX. 29]: 'The ornament of young men is their strength; and the glory of old men is a hoary head'; and again [ibid. xvii. 6]: 'The crown of old men is children's children; and the ornament of children are their fathers'; and again [Is. xxiv. 23]: 'And the moon shall be put to the blush, and the sun be made ashamed; for the Lord of Hosts will reign on Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients in glory.'"

S. Simeon b. Menassia said: "Those seven qualities which the wise have reckoned to the righteous were all of them confirmed in Rabbi and his sons."

MISHNA I. R. Jose b. Qisma said: "Once I was walking by the way and there met a man, and he gave me 'Peace!' and I returned him 'Peace!' He said to me: 'Rabbi, from what place art thou?' I said to him: 'From a great city of wise men and scribes am I.' He said to

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me: 'Rabbi, should you like to dwell with us in our place? I will give thee a thousand thousand dinars of gold, and goodly stones, and pearls.' I said to him: 'If thou shouldst give me all the silver, gold, and goodly stones, and pearls that are in the world, I would not dwell but in a place of Torah, as it is written in the Book of Psalms by the hand of David, King of Israel [Ps. cxix. 72]: "Better is unto me the law of thy mouth than thousands of gold and silver." Moreover, in the hour of a man's decease, not silver, not gold, nor goodly stones and pearls, accompany the man, but Torah and good words alone, as it is written [Prov. vi. 22]: "When thou walkest it shall lead thee, when thou liest down it shall watch over thee; when thou art awake it shall converse with thee." "When thou walkest it shall lead thee" in this world; "when thou liest down it shall

watch over thee" in the grave; "when thou art awake it shall converse with thee" in the world to come; and it is also written [Haggai ii. 8]: "Mine is the silver, and mine is the gold, saith the Lord of Hosts."

Five possessions had the Holy One, blessed be He, in this world, and these are they: Torah, one possession; Heaven and earth, one possession; Abraham, one possession; Israel, one possession; the Sanctuary, one possession. Torah, whence? As it is written [Prov. viii. 22]: "The Lord created 1 me as the beginning of his way; the first of his works from the commencement." Heaven and earth, whence? As it is written [Is. lxvi. 2] "The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool where is there a house that ye can build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?" And it is also written [Ps. civ. 24]: "How manifold are thy works, O Lord! in wisdom hast thou made them all; the earth is full of thy riches." 1 Abraham, whence? It is written [Gen. xiv. 19]: "And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram

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of the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth." Israel, whence? As it is written [Ex. xv. 16]: "Till thy people pass over, O Lord, till this people pass over which thou hast purchased." And it is also written [Ps. xvi. 3]: "In the saints who are on the earth, and in the excellent--in them is all my delight." The Sanctuary, whence? As it is written [Ex. xv. 7]: "The sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established." And it is also written [Ps. lxxviii, 54]: "And he brought them to his holy territory, even to this mount, which his right hand had acquired." 1

Whatsoever the Holy One, blessed be He, created in this world, He created not but for his glory, as it is written [Ps. xliii. 7]: "Every one that is called by my name, and whom I have created for my glory; whom I have formed; yea, whom I have made." And it is also written [Ex. xv. 18]: "The Lord will reign for ever and ever."

R. Hanania b. Aqashia said: "The Holy One, blessed be He, was pleased to give merit to Israel, therefore he multiplied unto them Torah and precepts, as it is written [Is. xlii. 21]: "The Lord willed to do this for the sake of his righteousness; therefore he magnifieth the law and maketh it honorable."

Tosephta--Aboth of R. Nathan.

2R. Simeon said there are three crowns: the crown of Torah, that of priesthood, and that of kingdom; the crown of a good name, however, is above all. Concerning the crown of priesthood: If one would offer all the gold and silver in the world for it, he could not acquire it, as it was only for Aaron and his children [Numb. xxv. 13].

The same is the case with the crown of kingdom, which cannot be gotten for all the gold and silver in the world, as it was only for David, as it is written [Ezek. xxxvii. 24]: "My servant David will be the prince for ever." But with the crown of Torah

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it is different; every one who wants to possess it, he may come and take it, as it is written [Is. Iv. 1]: "Every one of ye that thirsteth, come ye to the water" (meaning the Torah). Occupy thyself with the words of the Torah, and do not occupy thyself with idle things.

It happened to R. Elazar b. Simeon, etc. [1](#)

Three things were said of charitable men: he who gives charity may be blessed, but if he gives it in the form of a loan is still better; but he, however, who gives one money to do business with, with the understanding that he shall pay him half of the profits, is above all.

There are three different kinds among scholars; one who is able to ask questions and to answer them is a wise one; one who is only able to ask questions but not to answer them is inferior to him; but he who is able neither to ask nor to answer questions is not to be considered at all.

There are three different kinds of sweat that are beneficial to the body: the sweat following a sickness; the sweat produced by a bath; the sweat of labor. The sweat following a sickness is healing, but the sweat produced by a bath has no equal.

There are six kinds of tears: three of them are good and three are bad. Those produced by weeping, smoke, and in the toilet are bad (see Sabbath, p. 355). Those produced by spices, laughing, and by sharp fruit are good.

There are three advantages in an earthen vessel: it absorbs, does not exude, and gives no bad smell to the thing that is in it.

There are three advantages in a glass vessel: it does neither absorb nor exude, and it exposes to view what is therein contained; and keeps warm in a warm temperature, and cold in a cold temperature.

The money that the Israelites carried away from Egypt returned to Egypt, as it is written [Ex. xii. 36]: "And they emptied out Egypt"; and it is also written [Gen. xlvii. 14]: "And Joseph gathered up all the money," etc.; and it is written [I Kings, xiv. 25, 26]: "And it came to pass in the fifth year," etc.

The heavenly writing on the tables returned to its origin (see Pesachim, 178).

"*R. Jehuda b. Thema said,*" etc. He used also to say: Love Heaven, love all the commandments. If you do the least wrong

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to your companion, it shall be considered by you the greatest wrong; but if you have done him good, though it have been a great deal, you shall consider it little. On the contrary, if your companion has done you the least good, you shall consider it much; and if he has done you a great wrong, consider it little. Be as a tight leather-bag that has no opening to let in the wind. Be prepared to receive affliction, and be forgiving to those who oppress you.

The following articles were made and were hidden: The first tabernacle, and the vessels therein contained; the ark, the broken tables and the receptacle of the manna, the staff, the bottle of the oil of anointment; the staff of Aaron, its buds and blossoms; the garments of the first priests and the garments of the anointed priest. But the mortar of the house of Abtinas, the table, the candelabra of the Temple, the curtain, the golden plate, are still in Rome.

All that the Holy One, blessed be He, created in His world was so created only for His glory, as it is written [Is. xliii. 7]: "Every one that is called by my name, and whom I have created for my glory, whom I have formed-yea, whom I have made"; and it is also written [Ex. xv. 18]: "The Lord will reign for ever and ever."

R. Hananiah b. Akashia said: The Holy One, blessed be He, desired to reward Israel in the world to come, and therefore He magnified the Law for them and gave them a great number of merits, as it is written [Is. xlii. 21]: "The Lord willed to do this for the sake of his righteousness; therefore he magnifieth the law, and maketh it honorable."

END OF TRACT ABOTH AND OF ABOTH OF R. NATHAN.

Footnotes

[136:1](#) Chapter XL. of the original.

[141:1](#) The Hebrew terms for these are derived from the verb •••, which the Talmud translates literally, "to possess," "to acquire."

[142:1](#) The Hebrew terms for these are derived from the verb •••, which the Talmud translates literally, "to possess," "to acquire."

[142:2](#) Chapter XLI. of the original.

[143:1](#) See Section Festivals, Vol. VIII., Tract Taanith, pp. 52-53, the legend at length.