

CHAPTER IV.

SCHOLARS always are agreeable in society, but not so ordinary people. He who occupies himself only with study of the Scripture pursues the right course, yet the sages do not think so; with Mishnayoth, it is a course to be rewarded; but he who occupies himself with the study of the Talmud pursues a course than which there is no better. Still, it is advisable that one shall occupy himself with the study of Mishnayoth more than with that of the Talmud. Do not exact pay for thy teaching. Moreover, take no compensation whatever for it, for the Omnipotent has given His teaching to thee gratuitously; for the one who asks for reward destroys the whole world (because there are many who cannot afford to pay and will remain ignorant). And do not say: "I have no money to live on, and therefore I must take reward for my teaching." Remember all money is the Lord's, as it is written [Haggai, ii. 8]: "Mine is the silver, and mine is the gold, saith the Lord of hosts" (and He will supply you with money).

If you have done charity, be sure that you will be favored with money; and if it has been your good lot to acquire money, do charity with it so long as it is in your power. Give it to those who need it in this world, in order that you may get the world to come; for if you do not use it for charitable purposes, it will disappear suddenly,

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as it is written [Prov. xxiii. 5]: "When thou lettest merely thy eyes fly over it, it is no more." Do not complain of your being less wise than another, for you have not served (the sages) as much as he did. Neither shall you complain that the other one is rich and you are not, for it is not every man who is favored with two tables (of this and of the world to come). Do not complain that another one is beautiful and you are ugly, for at the time of death a man becomes a carcass; moreover, a carcass of any animal may be sold or presented to somebody, while no one cares even to look at a human carcass. Do not say: "That man is righteous, while I am not"; for both of you will have to account. Do not say: "That man is powerful, while I am weak"; for there is no power aside from the Torah, as it is written [Ps. ciii. 20]: "Bless the Lord, ye his angels, mighty in strength, that execute his word, hearkening unto the voice of his word." Bear always in mind the following: Know whence you come, whither you go, and before whom you will have to render an account, and do not turn your eyes on money which is not yours; for they close the gates of heaven against prayer. Let your ears not listen to vain talk, for they are most likely to get burned. Do not slander, for the mouth will be first on the day of judgment to give account. Be not possessed of slander or other bad things, or of robbery, for all the members of thy body will testify against thee on the day of judgment. Let thy feet not hasten thee to evil-doing, because it is likely that the angel of death will get there sooner, and wait for thee. Be not afraid of the court of justice on earth, where only witnesses may be bought, but fear the Court above, because thou art certain that there will be witnesses who will testify against thee. And not only this, but your own deeds proclaim thy accusation from time to time.

If you have performed all my commandments with joy, my attendants will come to meet you, and even I my

self will say to you: "Let thy coming be in peace." Your eyes that never looked at property not belonging to you shall have light in darkness, as it is written [Is. lviii. 10]: "Then shall shine forth in the darkness thy light, and thy obscurity be as the noonday." Your ears that have not listened to vain talk shall hear of peace in the world to come, as it is written [ibid. xxx. 21]: "And thy ears shall hear the world behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." Your mouth that has not slandered will be coveted by those who were used to slander. Your mouth that has studied the Torah will be a blessing to those who wish to be blessed. Your hands that have kept away from robbery, what can do unto you those who do injustice? Your hands that you have not withdrawn from doing charity, what can do to you those mighty men? Your feet that have not carried you to sin, what can the angel of death do unto you?

All that is said above is a warning to you, and you may do as you please, but do not say that you were not warned.

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