Pirkei Avos
Synthesized

Eclectic Torah Compilations

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TALMUDIC BOOKS
PIRKEI AVOS
SYNTHESIZED

Based on a variety of classic commentaries

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In Memory of
R’ Naftali (Tully) Burstein z”l
Raanana
ת.נ.ל.ב.ה.
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Preface

Pirkei Avos (Sayings of the Fathers) is dramatically unlike any other collection of wise sayings or book of thoughtful quotations.

Although almost all of these sayings of wisdom are attributed to one particular Sage or another, Pirkei Avos is really Torah Shebe’al Peh – the Oral Torah, and comes directly from God, passed on at Sinai from Moses, from Sage to Sage, and ultimately to the Tannaim of the Mishna and Braisa. As such, we must approach these adages with added reverence and humility. We must study and seriously contemplate their meanings and messages, and their inherent truths. But mostly, we must give effort to apply these teachings to our daily lives.

What you have before you is a modest attempt to synthesize the essence of each Mishna incorporating the insights of a few easily accessible and popular commentaries. This was done with the intent of enabling the reader to read and absorb the basics of each judicious maxim quickly, enjoyably and meaningfully.

For this new edition, I have added the Hebrew text of each Mishna with my translation. I based the translation of a few Biblical verses on the Hirsch Siddur edition.

Key Sources Used for This Monograph:

Rashi, Rabbeinu Yona, Rav Ovadiah M’Bartenura, Ikar Tosafos Yom Tov, Biurei HaGra, Rabbi Yaakov Emden, Rabbi S.R. Hirsch, Siddur Avodas Yisroel of R’ Seligmann Baer, Eitz Yosef in Siddur Otzar Hatefillos, and R’ Eliezer Levi in Mishna M’fureshes. Due to the brilliant uniqueness of Rav Hirsch’s commentary, it has been singled out and shown in the lightface type.

Footnotes are based on the commentary of R’ Chanoch Albeck.
Moses received the Torah at Sinai and transmitted it to Joshua who, in turn, transmitted it to the Elders, who transmitted it to the Prophets. The Prophets transmitted it to the Men of the Great Assembly. They said three things, "Be deliberate in your judgments, set up many students, and make a fence around the Torah.

The Torah in its entirety, both the Written Law and the Oral Law, including these lessons, was derived from God at Sinai. It has been faithfully transmitted from generation to generation, from Moses down to our own day. As all of Israel was present at Sinai, the Giving of the Torah was a matter of experience and actual knowledge, not one of faith.

You should be patient, serious and deliberate before judging other people; set up many students for yourself, even when you are old; and create safeguards by making decrees and ordinances to promote and preserve the Law. Setting students up means to make certain that they are thoroughly well-versed and can check the sources themselves, and that they have enough conviction to rely on their own faith. Teach Torah to whoever wants to learn it, regardless of their level of understanding.

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1 From Shmuel to Malachi.
2 At beginning of the Second Temple period.
3 The Men of the Great Assembly.
4 Before deciding a case.
5 In order not to violate a Torah prohibition.
Shimon the Righteous was one of the last surviving members of the Great Assembly. He was wont to say, "The world is supported on three pillars: The Torah, the Service, and acts of mercy."  

The world can exist only when there is observance of Torah, prayer and Temple service, and acts of loving-kindness, such as lending money to the poor. Lending is greater than charity as it does not shame the poor man. Loving-kindness is greater than charity since it is performed with the rich as well as with the poor, the dead as well as with the living, one’s person as well as with one’s money. The world was only brought into being so there would be a place for these things to exist. Torah is knowledge of the truth and the Will of God; Service refers to dutiful obedience and proper attitude towards God; and Loving-kindness is selflessness, brotherhood and creating happiness and prosperity for our fellow men.

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6 With your fellow man.
Antigonus, from Socho\textsuperscript{7}, received it\textsuperscript{8} from Shimon the Righteous. He was wont to say, "Do not be like those slaves who serve their master only because they want a reward. Rather, be like those slaves who serve their master, regardless of any reward\textsuperscript{9}; and may the awe of Heaven\textsuperscript{10} be upon you."

Perform the Commandments simply because they were so demanded by God, and out of awe of Him recognizing how great He is, and not because of the reward you will receive for observing them. \textbullet{} But also serve God out of love. For the one who serves God out of love is meticulous with the Positive Commandments, while the one who serves Him out of fear is careful with the Prohibitions. \textbullet{} Being called to serve God, as we Jews have been, is in itself the richest reward.

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\textsuperscript{7} One of two cities in Judea with this name.
\textsuperscript{8} The Torah.
\textsuperscript{9} Only out of love.
\textsuperscript{10} מִשִּׁמְעוֹן הַצַּדִּיק, fear of God, but also that God sees what you do.
Yosse ben Yoezer from Tzereidoh\textsuperscript{11} and Yosse ben Yochanan, the Jerusalemite, received it from them\textsuperscript{12}. Yosse from Tzereidoh said, "Make your home a gathering place\textsuperscript{13} for the sages, and cover yourself in the dust of their feet\textsuperscript{14}, and drink thirstily\textsuperscript{15} their words".

Your home should be a place where distinguished scholars (are willing to) assemble. Sit by their feet to learn Torah, drink their every word thirstily, and serve them. Even the ordinary conversation of sages is instructive and should be studied.

\textsuperscript{11} The name of a city.
\textsuperscript{12} Alternative reading, from him, Antigonus.
\textsuperscript{13} A study hall.
\textsuperscript{14} A way of honoring them.
\textsuperscript{15} With great desire.
Yosse ben Yochanan, the Jerusalemite, said, "Open your home for providing welfare, and poor people should become members of your household. Do not overly engage in conversation with a woman." As this refers to his wife, even more so does this apply to his fellow's wife. From here the Sages learned that one who overly engages in conversation with a woman brings perniciousness upon himself, and nullifies the words of Torah. In the end, he shall inherit Gehinnom.

Open your home to way-farers, and either make the indigent members of your household or hire them as household staff. Make your home a place to relieve the distress of those in want and who are suffering. Let the homeless share in the pleasures of your home and hospitality. Do not engage in idle chatter with women, even your wife, for most such discussions are frivolous, without modesty, and generally wind up by speaking gossip. Better you should spend your time learning Torah. A man cannot think about Torah and women at the same time. It is either one or the other. Don’t chat with women because people might get suspicious of your motives. Talking leads to desire, and desire leads to action. Nevertheless, respect and attach importance to your wife’s views, opinions and counsel. Hold her in esteem and show genuine appreciation for her wisdom by engaging her in serious conversations.

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16 For way-farers.
17 You will just up sinning.
Everyone must choose a rabbi for himself to teach him Torah, and proper behavior. Find a teacher who can help you attain spiritual perfection. One should not teach himself Torah, but must always look for a teacher. A teacher is preferable than relying on your own reasoning. One remembers more from his teacher than what he learns on his own. Acquire a good, trustworthy friend. Rebuke from a true friend will not diminish your mutual admiration. Judge everyone favorably and treat them charitably, for as you judge others, so will God judge you.
Nittai the Arbelite said, "Distance yourself from a bad neighbor, do not associate with an evil person, and do not despair from punishments."

Avoid bad neighbors for they will have a harmful and detrimental influence upon you. Before you check out a new house, check out the neighborhood. Avoid contact and dealings with wicked people for their dishonesty, thoughtlessness, and indifference will soil you, too. Neither despair if you don’t see them as yet punished nor contemplate joining with them in their fleeting moment of success. Know that the wicked will be punished, sooner or later. Don’t take for granted that your wealth is everlasting. Do not become a member of a community where evil people dominate.

Even though things are going good for you now, if you have sinned, know that you will be punished.
A judge must not do anything to assist a litigant, such as by bringing evidence to support his position or by helping him formulate his arguments. Don’t give tips to the litigants. A judge must look at all litigants suspiciously in order to investigate their claims thoroughly. However, after the verdict, he is to view them as being innocent people who have willingly accepted the judgment. A judge must not favor one party over another, such as a poor man over a rich man or an honorable person over an ordinary man. A judge must rule objectively and dispassionately without regard to personalities.

24 By teaching them what to say when before the judges in order that they receive a favorable verdict.
25 Question them thoroughly making sure they are not trying to deceive you.
26 As honest and righteous people.
Shimon ben Shetach said, "Thoroughly investigate the witnesses, and be very careful with what and how you say things, lest they learn from you how to falsify matters".

Investigate the veracity of the witnesses very well. Measure your words very carefully lest the witnesses and litigants learn from your line of questioning and your inflections as how to lie by adjusting their testimony accordingly.
Shemayah and Avtalyon received it from them. Shemayah said, "Love work, hate having to be in a position of ruling over others, and do not become chummy with the ruling authorities 27."

Love working. ✠ This is so even if one has enough money that he doesn’t have to work, since idleness leads to boredom, and boredom leads to sin. ✠ The one who doesn’t live off of charity lives longer. ✠ Hate having power over others. Rather, flee from this. ✠ The demands and pressures on one in a position of power bury him in that position. ✠ Do not become intimate with the authorities in order to receive entitlement to rule over others. ✠ The more one serves a king, the less one serves the King. ✠ The purpose of these maxims seems to be to counsel us to preserve our personal independence.

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27 Make no such efforts.
Avtalyon said, "Wise men! Take great care with what you say" because you will be condemned to an exile in a place of bad waters, and your students who follow you will drink and die, and you will find that the name of Heaven has been profaned."

Sages must be extra careful with what they say. The consequences of misunderstood words and rash statements can be disastrous. In reality, this warning applies to everyone, except that the Sages influence more people, so it is addressed to them. Scholars are cautioned against delivering inaccurate, vague or ambiguous lessons which may inspire erroneous views and result in spiritual and moral deviations from goodness and truth.

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28 Before your students.
29 You will be held accountable for what you say.
30 A reference to detrimental opinions and beliefs which will be quoted in your name.
31 For they will sin or because the teaching was not in accordance with the Halacha.
32 People will either say that you died young even though you learned Torah or you learned Torah but did not teach it in accordance with the Halacha.
Hillel and Shamai received it from them. Hillel said, "Make yourself a disciple of Aaron who loved peace, pursued peace, loved all human beings, and drew them near to the Torah."

Emulate Aaron, love and actively pursue peace, and love all people without distinction, for we are all the children of one father and, thus, brothers; attract them to Torah. All mankind are creatures of God. Pursuing peace means to go to wherever you have to, to attain it. Sacrifice for peace! but not at the expense of compromising your loyalty to God and your duty to Him.
He said, “One who seeks to exalt his own name, loses his name. The one who does not add, will diminish. The one who does not learn is deservant of death. The one who uses the crown, will vanish.

The one who is selfishly greedy in the pursuit of honor and fame will ultimately be repudiated for his reprehensible conduct. Whatever good reputation he may have gained at the outset will vanish apace. One must always add to his learning, because he who fails to do so loses the opportunity for a worthwhile and worthy life. Someone who says, “I have learned everything there is to learn in the Torah”, forfeits his life. Do not exploit the crown of Torah-learning or Torah scholars for your own benefit or for manipulating Nature, as by incanting God’s Name for magical purposes, for this will remove you from this world.

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33 Hillel.
34 Pursues veneration of his own name.
35 To his learning.
36 His learning.
37 Of Torah for his own benefit.
38 From this world.
Pursuit of self-perfection, performance of Mitzvahs and Torah-learning are, first and foremost, one's own responsibility. Never keep your learning for yourself alone, but spread it amongst others. Do things for the benefit others and not just for yourself. It is only when one, in selfless devotion, actively works to create, to establish and to increase the happiness and prosperity of his fellowmen, does he begin to become truly human in the image of his God. Do now while you are alive, for there is no doing after death; only reward or punishment. Torah must be learned every day, and regularly, because, if not, it will be forgotten. Torah is to be your main objective in life.

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39 Hillel.
40 If I do not improve my ways.
41 If I do not do now what I am obliged to do.
42 My procrastination will cause me to miss the proper time to do things.
Shammai said, "Make your Torah enduring (a regular activity); say little and do a lot; and welcome everyone hospitably".

Establish and adhere to a regular schedule of learning Torah.  Make Torah permanent, and everything else transitory.  Don’t come to change the Halacha or the Tradition.  Say little and do much, for this is the way of the righteous.  Receive everyone warmly, friendly and with a kind disposition, as this promotes brotherhood, unity, and solidarity.  Angry people are disliked.  Be ready at all times to, with the best of your ability, fulfill whatever good and reasonable request another may make of you.

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43 Promise little.
Rabban Gamliel was wont to say, "Appoint for yourself a rabbi; remove yourself from doubt; and do not tithe by means of estimating."

Find a trustworthy and conscientious instructor with whom you can confer in cases of uncertainty. Always be precise in your tithing, measuring, weighing and calculations, and do not rely on estimates which inevitably result in errors.

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44 Appoint for yourself a rabbi to help you remove any doubts you may have.
Shimon his son said, "My entire life, I have grown up among the Sages and I have taken note that nothing is better for the body than silence; and it is not the talk that matters, but the action; and he who adds words, brings sin."

Silence is the best response to humiliation. Speech of men and their discussions should center on spiritual and moral concerns and not much on the physical aspects of life and personal affairs. Regardless, too much talk is always bad. Although the real objective is to learn in order to do, learning for learning’s sake can also be of great value. Unfounded conceptual extrapolations lead to sin.

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45 Rabban Gamliel.
46 Of Torah.
47 Performing the Mitzvos.
Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel said, "The world rests on three pillars: the Law, the truth and peace, as it says (Zechariah 8), 'Administer truth, justice and peace at your gates.'"

The world can only exist if there is truth, justice and peace. Repentance and Torah are truth. Without truth there would only be error, falsehood and deceit. Without justice there would selfishness, violence, aggression and usurpation. Without peace there would be no one who would freely sacrifice of his own for the sake of peace. The one who habitually lies even though he has neither loss nor gain will become incapable of speaking the truth, because lying has now become his intrinsic nature.
Rebbe° asked, "What is the correct course that a man should choose? One which is admirable for himself°°, and others see it honorable for him°°. Be as careful with a light Mitzvah as with a more serious one, since you do not know the reward for Mitzvahs. Consider the reward°° you shall receive versus any loss you may incur by performing a Mitzvah, and think of the retribution you shall receive versus the pleasure you had from committing a sin. Always remember these three things and you shall not come to sinning: Contemplate what is above you, an eye which sees, an ear which hears, and all your deeds are recorded in the book."

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The noblest path for one to travel through life is for him to act in a way which brings glory to himself by observing God’s Torah and by carefully fulfilling all your obligations to your fellow man. Make yourself acceptable to people by avoiding extreme behavior. Even being overly generous is to be shunned. Execute every Torah obligation with equal earnestness, eagerness and enthusiasm for no one knows what the real rewards are for any Mitzvah. Have in mind that the ultimate reward for performing a Mitzvah exceeds any loss you might have now for performing it, and the final punishment for a transgression

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° Rebbe Yehudah HaNassi.
°° It is good for him, it fits him.
°°° Others praise him for his ways and he finds favor with them.
°°°° Its ultimate reward.
exceeds any of its short-term benefits and ephemeral pleasures. The reward for each Mitzvah has been withheld from us in order that we perform all the Mitzvahs. Otherwise we would only perform the more profitable ones. The recompense for any evil act is instantaneous; it takes the form of a sense of loss of moral purity, a weakening of moral fiber, a greater propensity to additional sin, and the realization that we have failed to fulfill our purpose, sinning against our destiny. Do not say that God does not care about simple Mitzvahs, “What is it to Him if I do it or not?” He cares! All acts have everlasting ramifications. God withholds the reward in this world for performing a Mitzvah in order that the person will do it with faith. Remind yourself at all times of three things, and you will never sin: Know that there is an omniscient God above you; that He sees and hears everything that you do; and that all your deeds are recorded. God forgets nothing.
Rabban Gamliel, son of Rebbe Yehudah the Prince said, "How pleasant it is to combine the learning of Torah with Derech Eretz\textsuperscript{52}, the way of the land! If you toil in both, sin shall be forgotten\textsuperscript{53}. And any Torah which is not accompanied by work will, in the end, be nullified and you will be drawn to sin\textsuperscript{54}. And all those who engage themselves with the public should do so for the sake of Heaven. The merits of their\textsuperscript{55} fathers assist them\textsuperscript{56}, and their\textsuperscript{57} righteousness shall remain with them forever. And I shall reward you\textsuperscript{58} greatly, as if you had done it."

How good is it to combine Torah-learning with gainful employment! \textbullet{} For if you become weakened by work and tired from learning Torah, you will have no energy or time to sin. \textbullet{} Nor will you have any desire to steal since you have of your own. \textbullet{} Torah without work results in idleness and invites sin. \textbullet{} One who serves the public must do so only for the sake of Heaven and not in order to reap personal benefit or honor. Your reward will be great. It will be calculated by the total merit accrued by the public for all their good deeds. \textbullet{} Those involved in community affairs must be prompted solely by a sense of duty without ulterior motives. \textbullet{} The one who inspires and causes others to do good deeds and fulfill their duty has even greater merit than the one who does the same with his own resources.

\textsuperscript{52} An occupation.
\textsuperscript{53} You will be so preoccupied in those other matters that you will be too weary to think about sinning.
\textsuperscript{54} Such as thievery and robbery, and many other sins.
\textsuperscript{55} Those of the public.
\textsuperscript{56} In succeeding.
\textsuperscript{57} Fathers.
\textsuperscript{58} Who toil with the public.
Be cautious with the ruling authorities inasmuch as they do not bring people close to themselves except for their own purposes. They appear loving when they see this as advantageous for themselves, but will not stand by you in your hour of need.

Be skeptical of governmental officials and of politicians. They only get chummy with people who serve their personal agendas. They favor someone when they can gain something from this association, but will disassociate themselves and not support him when he is in trouble.

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59 This is Rabban Gamliel speaking. This is addressed to those who have to deal with the government.
He was wont to say, "Do His Will as if it were your own so that He shall do your will as if it were His. Negate your will in place of His Will so that He shall nullify the will of others in place of your will." Hillel said, "Do not separate yourself from the public, never trust yourself until the day of your death, and do not judge your fellow until you are in his place. Never say anything the end of which cannot be heard, and never say that you will learn when you will have free time to do so, for you may never be free.

Do Heaven’s Will with the same fervor as if it were your own will, so that Heaven will fulfill your will as if it were Heaven’s Will. When there is a conflict, defer your will in favor of Heaven’s Will so that Heaven will cancel other people’s will in favor of yours. Do not say of any word that it cannot possibly be heard, for in the end it will be heard.

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60 Rabban Gamliel the son of Rebbe Yehuda Hanassi.
61 Whole-heartedly.
62 Observe the Torah, perform the Commandments.
63 To sin.
64 Who may want to cause you harm.
65 Participate in their sorrows, joys and enterprises.
66 Believing that you are so righteous that you won’t sin.
67 Negatively.
68 You find yourself in the same predicament as he is in, and you do not falter.
69 Say nothing which is incomprehensible nor tell secrets.
70 Torah.
71 From your various occupations.
He\textsuperscript{72} was wont to say, "The ignorant man\textsuperscript{73} cannot dread sin, the unlearned person\textsuperscript{74} cannot be virtuous, the meek man cannot be learned\textsuperscript{75}, and the overly-meticulous person\textsuperscript{76} cannot be a teacher. The one always engaged in commerce cannot become wise, and if you find yourself in a place where there are no men\textsuperscript{77}, try to be a man.

If you abandon the public in their time of need, they will abandon you in yours. It is not to the individual, but the community that God entrusted His Torah as an inheritance for all generations to come. Don’t assume that you will always remain faithful to God. You may even come to abandon Judaism at an old age. Never judge anyone until you are in his shoes. He may have failed the test, but so might have you. Never begin to say something which you might not be able to finish, lest the listener misunderstand your words and be misled. Alternatively, do not refrain from expressing a good and true opinion for ultimately you will be heard. Don’t reveal secrets, including your own, to anyone. Never say that you will get around to learning Torah when you have the time, lest you never have the time, and end up never learning.

A person without Torah will not fear sinning for such a person does not see the long-term consequences of his actions, and he denies God's system of reward and punishment. A person without Torah cannot be fully virtuous. A shy person cannot become a scholar. Bashfulness is a worthy attribute, except for when learning. Never be embarrassed to ask a question. An impatient person cannot teach. The more business dealings one engages in, the less wisdom he will have and the less time he will have to teach others. When there is no one else to lead and instruct, lead and instruct. But if there is someone else to lead, go learn Torah. If you are qualified and have the skills to act as leader and spokesman, endeavor to take part in affairs where articulate leadership is needed, for under such conditions reticence would not be modest, but downright criminal.

\textsuperscript{72} Hillel.  
\textsuperscript{73} One lacking both Torah and good character.  
\textsuperscript{74} One weak in his Torah learning.  
\textsuperscript{75} He will be too embarrassed to ask questions about the things he doesn’t understand.  
\textsuperscript{76} Who is quick to anger. He has no patience to answer his students' questions.  
\textsuperscript{77} Who do what has to be done.
He, too, saw a skull floating on the surface of the water and said, "Because you drowned others, you were drowned; and those who drowned you, will be drowned."

God punishes measure for measure.

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78 Hillel.

79 By the same standard you used (regarding them), you will be measured.
He was wont to say, "The more meat, the more worms. The more assets, the more worries. The more women, the more spooks. The more maidservants, the more licentiousness. The more servants, the more theft. The more Torah, the more life. The more learning, the more wisdom. The more counsel, the more understanding. The more charity and righteousness, the more peace. If you acquire a good name, you acquired it for yourself, but if you acquire words of Torah, you acquire a life in the World to Come."

The more one eats and drinks, the more good food for the worms there will be. The more assets one has, the more worrying there will be. The more women one has, the more superstition there will be. The more maidservants one has, the more decadence there will be. The more servants one has, the more thievery there will be. However, the more Torah one has, the more life there will be. The more students one has, the more wisdom there will be. The more one asks for sage advice, the more understanding there will be. The more one gives charity and encourages others to give, the more peace there will be. The acquisition of a good name for oneself is good, but the acquisition of Torah-learning will buy one life in the World to Come. Money one can inherit, but a good name one has to earn for himself. Who is the one who has "acquired" Torah? This the individual who absorbed the words of Torah to such a degree that they have become part and parcel of his thoughts and emotions and he has learned how to apply them in study and in his personal development.

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80 Hillel.
81 In the grave.
82 How to prevent losing his money.
83 Women were more superstitious.
84 Lit., sitting – before the sages.
85 Which you can never lose.
Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai received the Torah from Hillel and Shammai. He\(^{86}\) was wont to say, "If you learned a lot of Torah, do not think good of yourself\(^{87}\), because it was for this you were created." Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai had five students: Rebbe Eliezer ben Horkenus, Rebbe Yehoshua ben Chananyah, Rebbe Yosse the Kohen, Rebbe Shimon ben Nesanel, and Rebbe Elazar ben Arach. He enumerated praises for each one. Of Rebbe Eliezer ben Horkenus he said, "A plastered cistern\(^{88}\) which does not lose a drop\(^{89}\)." Of Rebbe Yehoshua ben Chananyah he said, "Happy is she\(^{90}\) who gave birth to him." Of Rebbe Yosse the Kohen he said, "Compassionate." Of Rebbe Shimon ben Nesanel he said, "Fears sin." And of Rebbe Elazar ben Arach he said, "An overwhelming spring\(^{91}\)." He\(^{92}\) was wont to say, "If all the sages of Israel would be on one side of a balance scale, and Rebbe Eliezer ben Horkenus on the other side, he would outweigh them all!". Abba Shaul said in his name, "If all the sages of Israel would be in one side of the scale, and even with Rebbe Eliezer ben Horkenas there, and Rebbe Elazar ben Arach on the other side, the latter would outweigh them all."

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\(^{86}\) Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai.

\(^{87}\) As one who thinks himself special since he did something voluntarily.

\(^{88}\) Nothing is lost, nothing is absorbed in the ground.

\(^{89}\) He forgets nothing.

\(^{90}\) His mother.

\(^{91}\) He adds to what he has learned from his teachers.

\(^{92}\) Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai.

\(^{93}\) Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai.
Don’t be arrogant because you have learned a great deal of Torah, since it was for that reason you were created.

*From among his many students, Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkaï had five particularly noteworthy disciples who had very different character traits.*

One was Rabbi Eliezer ben Horkenus who never forgot anything of his learning. Another was Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananyah who was so wise and moral that it brought great praise on his family, for surely he learned his love of learning and good behavior from home. When his mother was pregnant with him, she would go to the Study Halls and beg for mercy that her child would be a Sage. Another was Rabbi Yossi HaCohen who was remarkably virtuous. Another was Rabbi Shimon ben Nesanael who had great fear of sinning. Another was Rabbi Elazar ben Arach who was constantly churning out more and more Torah wisdom, like a never-ending spring. Our Sages have stated: “Between Sinai and Oker Harim, Sinai is preferred.” This means the person who has a breadth of Torah knowledge is preferred over the one who has great analytic skills in Torah.

Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkaï thought that Rabbi Eliezer ben Horkenus was greater than all the rest combined, while Abba Shaul thought that it was Rabbi Elazar (ben Arach) who was the greatest.
He said to them, "Go out and see which is the straight way to which a person should adhere. Rebbe Eliezer said, "A good eye". Rebbe Yehoshua said, "A good friend". Rebbe Yosse said, "A good neighbor". Rebbe Shimon said, "Seeing what will be, i.e. common sense". Rebbe Elazar said, "A good heart." He said to them, "Go see what is the bad way from which a person should distance himself." Rebbe Eliezer said, "A bad eye." Rebbe Yehoshua said, "A bad friend". Rebbe Yosse said, "A bad neighbor". Rebbe Shimon said, "Borrowing without repaying, regardless if he borrows from a person or he borrows from the Holy One, blessed be He, as it says (Psalms 37), 'Evil is the borrower who does not repay, and he who deals generously and is a giver is righteous.'" Rebbe Elazar said, "A good heart". He said to them, "I prefer the words of Rebbe Elazar ben Arach since they encompass all your words."

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94 Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai.
95 One who is never jealous of anyone, and he gives of his own to others.
96 One should acquire a good friend for himself.
97 One should search out for a good neighbor.
98 Think of the consequences of your actions and you will be more careful with what you do.
99 Everything is dependent upon having a good heart.
100 One whom you should avoid.
101 One who borrows from a person is like he is borrowing from God.
102 When he borrowed, he did not calculate how he was going to pay his debt. Consequently, he gets into trouble.
Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai asked these students what they thought is the preeminent nature that a person should adhere to in his life.

**Rabbi Eliezer:**

A person should not be jealous of anyone else, he should be satisfied with what he has, and he should look upon everyone and everything in a favorable light. Never place obstacles into the path of the happiness and prosperity of your neighbor and gladly do whatever may promote his welfare.

**Rabbi Yehoshua:**

A person should make sure that he has a good friend who can admonish him when necessary, and exhort him to do good, but also that he himself should act as a good friend to others to do the same for them.

**Rabbi Yosse:**

One should have a good neighbor, because a neighbor is close-by day and night, unlike a friend who is only there some of the time. He should also learn to be a good neighbor himself by teaching himself how to act in a neighborly and friendly manner. One should only live in the neighborhood of good people.

**Rabbi Shimon:**

One should be responsible and always consider the short and long-term consequences of his actions and words. Such a person will never be guilty of frivolous and reckless behavior.

**Rabbi Elazar:**

One should have a good heart, for all dispositions come from the heart. If one is good, it is because he has a good heart. One should only will good for others. One with a good heart is incapable of desiring evil and is ready for every good endeavor. His heart is receptive only to the good and directed to the good alone.

To this Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai agreed saying, “What Rabbi Elazar said includes what all the others have said”. Generous and benevolent people are beneficial to everyone.
Then Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai asked them what is negative from which a person should distance himself?

*Rabbi Eliezer:*
A bad eye. Such a person experiences distress when others prosper and rejoices when others suffer loss and sorrow, grief and misery.

*Rabbi Yehoshua:*
A bad friend. Those characterized with a bad eye or heart or bad friends or neighbors are dangers to our moral purity. We are not only forbidden to associate with them, we must distance ourselves from them.

*Rabbi Yosse:*
A bad neighbor.

*Rabbi Shimon:*
The one who does not repay his loans, for a person who borrows with no intent of repaying is an evil thief. He is the opposite of the one who sees the consequences of his actions. He should have calculated if he would have the means to repay his debts on time. He should also have been concerned about how his defaulting would impact the lender and those dependent on him.

*Rabbi Elazar:*
A bad heart.

To this Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai agreed saying, “What Rabbi Elazar said includes what all the others have said”.
They each said three things. Rebbe Eliezer said, "Your fellow's honor should be as dear to you as your own, do not be quick to anger, repent the day before your death, and warm yourself by the fire of the sages, but be careful not to burn yourself with their hot coals for their bite is the bite of a fox, their sting is the sting of the scorpion, their hiss is the hiss of a snake, and all their words are like fiery coals".

Each of these students had three sayings they were wont to say.

*Rabbi Eliezer*

Honor your fellow as you would honor yourself; do not be quick to anger; and repent the day before your death. Not knowing when you might die, repent every day. 🌟 Although anger is a perfectly normal human trait, being angry is characteristic of fools. 🌟 To this he added two more things: warm yourself with the fire of the Sages, but don’t get too close to them for you may come to burn yourself. This means don’t think that you know so much as to be able to argue with them. You probably don’t, and they will cut you down to size quickly. 🌟 The Sages’ words are a fiery force. Many an ancient precept or ordinance may seem “burned out”, obsolete and extinct, but they hold within them an eternal flame which will burn the hand that would touch them with irreverence. 🌟 Torah scholars are as dangerous as foxes whose bites are sharp and deep, poisonous as scorpions, and astute as snakes. Their words are like burning coals.

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103 Become close to the sages to listen to their words. From this point on, more is added to these three initial things.
104 Be careful that you show them no disrespect.
105 A bite which is difficult to heal.
Rebbe Yehoshua said, "A bad eye, evil passions and misanthropy remove a person from this world".

**Rabbi Yehoshua:**

A bad eye, an evil inclination, and misanthropy remove a person from this world.

- What is a “bad eye”? This is either someone who is never satisfied with what he has and always wants more or it is someone who is jealous of others and schemes to harm them.
- Why do these things “remove a person from this world”? Because hatred brings one to perform evil deeds.
- Lust kills.
Rebbe Yosse\textsuperscript{106} said, "Your fellow's money should be as dear to you\textsuperscript{107} as is your own. Prepare yourself for learning Torah, because Torah is not inherited\textsuperscript{108}. All your deeds should be done for the sake of Heaven".

\textbf{Rabbi Yosse:}

Treat your fellow’s money as if it were your own; everyone must learn his own Torah because Torah wisdom is not inherited; and do everything for the sake of Heaven and in purity. "Everything" includes eating, drinking and having relations. ◆ What does it mean to “treat your fellow’s money as if it were your own”? This means don’t charge interest, be fraudulent or dishonest in business. ◆ It is not enough merely not to be envious of the wealth of our fellow-man or to view it with unconcern, we should be happy when he prospers, we must not stand by idly if we can guard him from injury, and we should rejoice at any opportunity we may have to help him improve his lot.

\textsuperscript{106} Rebbe Yosse the Kohen.
\textsuperscript{107} You are careful not to lose it.
\textsuperscript{108} You must learn it on your own.
Rebbe Shimon⁹⁹ said, "Be careful with saying Krias Shema and prayer. When you pray, do not pray in a perfunctory manner, but do so compassionately and with supplications before the Holy One, blessed be He, as it says (Joel 2), 'For He is merciful and forbearing, He is patient, withholding His anger. He is full of loving-kindness, and forgiving of badness.' And do not hold yourself evil in your own eyes."¹¹¹

Rabbi Shimon:

Be meticulous to say the Shema and the various Prayers in their correct times, and recite them with the properly prescribed texts. When you pray, pray with compassion and as a supplication, and not like it was some obligatory burden. Never consider yourself a sinner who God abandons. That is, never give up hope that God will answer your prayers and have mercy on you. Your soul is holy and pure, and no one inherits the sins of his forefathers. This is a world where we can save ourselves from sin by prayer and repentance. Rather, consider yourself average, for someone who holds himself to be evil will not see the malevolence of his sins or he may despair about the efficacy of his repentance and not even try to repent.

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⁹⁹ Ben Nesaanel.
¹⁰⁰ Do not pray simply because you are required to.
¹¹¹ Do not consider yourself an evil person, so that you will not come to do evil, and even if others do not know you as an evil-doer. Alternatively, do not do evil even if no one else sees you. Act in private as you do in public.
Rebbe Elazar\textsuperscript{112} said, "Be diligent in your Torah learning, know how to respond to the heretic\textsuperscript{113}, and know before whom it is that you toil. He\textsuperscript{114} is trustworthy with His workers, and He pays them for their efforts."

\textit{Rabbi Elazar:}

Be persistent and diligent in your Torah-learning, including Talmud and Halacha, until you know all its principles, details and Laws. ◊ Know how to respond to the heretic. ◊ Only the one who continuously and thoroughly studies Torah, and delves into it with devotion will clearly see the speciousness and invalidity of the scorners’ allegations and arguments and know that they are founded on ignorance and distortion of the facts. ◊ Know before whom you toil, and who the real boss is. ◊ Don’t worry, for He will pay your salary.

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{112} Ben Arach.  
\bibitem{113} Who engages you in disputation.
\bibitem{114} God.
\end{thebibliography}
Rebbe Tarfon said, "The day is short, the task is great, and the workers are lazy. Yet the reward is great, and the Boss is demanding."

Although life in this world is short and we have so much Torah to learn and observe, we are lazy. Remember, however, that our final reward is great, and God is very demanding. All people are indolent by nature, some more than others.

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115 Life.
116 Learning Torah.
Sixteen

He was wont to say, "It is not for you to finish the job nor are you free to avoid it. If you learned a lot of Torah, you shall receive a great reward. He is trustworthy to pay the wages for your work. Know, too, that the righteous ones shall only receive their full payment in the future." 

Do not despair given the immense task of learning and observing so much Torah since you are not expected to complete this task, only that you must be constantly engaged in it. You cannot shirk this responsibility. The good that God wants to see accomplished on Earth is not all meant for one individual to complete. Any human being can contribute only one fraction to the whole. It is only through the united efforts of all that the salvation to come into flower on Earth can be brought about. Everyone must make his contribution. You will receive reward for whatever Torah you learn and for the amount of effort you exert in thwarting your evil inclination which seeks to divert you from your mission. You will also be punished for the time you wasted when you could have learned Torah. The ultimate reward for the righteous, however, will not be given in this world, but is held for them in the World to Come.

117 Rebbe Tarfon.
118 Therefore, do not despair in not being able to complete the task of Torah.
119 Do not say, 'Since I am willing to forfeit my reward, I will not have to learn'.
120 The World to Come.
Akavia ben Mehalalel said, "Contemplate three things and you shall not come to sin. Know from where you came, know to where you are going, and know before whom it is that you shall have to give an accounting. 'From where you came' – a putrid drop. 'To where you are going' – to a place of filth, decay and maggots. 'To whom you shall have to give an accounting' – to the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He."

Constantly be cognizant of three things and you will not come to sin, for you will then be infused with a great sense of humility: 🚀 Human life, including yours, began with but a putrid drop of semen. 🚀 The end for everyone is death. 🚀 You will be buried deep in the ground and eaten by worms and maggots. 🚀 You personally will be held fully accountable for your words and deeds by the King of Kings, God.
Rebbe Chanina, Sgan Hakohanim said, "Always pray for the welfare of the government for if it were not for fear of it, the people would eat each other up alive." Rebbe Chananyah ben Tardion said, "Two people who sit together and do not exchange words of Torah between them are a caucus of clowns, as it says (Psalms 1), 'Do not sit among a gathering of mockers'. However, if two sit together and words of Torah are exchanged between them, the Divine Presence hovers over them, as it says (Malachi 3), 'When those who fear God speak each with his fellow, God listens attentively, and He hears, and He writes this in the Book of Remembrance before Him, of those who fear God and contemplate His Name.' From here we learn of two, but from where do we learn that the Holy One, blessed be He, fix the wages fore even for one person who sits and engages in Torah? It says (Lamentations 3), 'Although he may sit alone, he may feel at ease, since he (knows that he) shall receive his due".

121 Alt. Rebbe Chanania.
122 The Kohen who was responsible for supervising the other Kohanim and their Service in the Temple.
123 Their peace is your peace.
Pray for the peace of the ruling authorities for it is they who instill fear in the population in order to maintain public order. For if the government could not exercise its authority, the hand of everyone would be lifted up against all the others and all of society would disintegrate. The truly righteous empathize with the sorrows of all human beings and pray for their peace and welfare.

If two sit and do not discuss Torah, they sit in a place of mockers. Whereas, if the two discuss Torah, God’s Holy Presence is found between them. God bestows charm on those who remain silent to the harassment of scoffers. One who squanders his time and doesn’t learn Torah, ridicules its value. These scorners are foes of God’s Law who, by glibness of speech, undermine the respect and reverence in which the Torah should be held. God will also reward the one who sits alone engaged in Torah, for this is as if the entire Torah was (created) just for him.
Rebbe Shimon said, "Three who ate at one table and did not exchange words of Torah are compared with those who ate sacrifices for the dead (i.e. idols), as it says (Isaiah 28), 'For all the tables were entirely filled with vomit.' However, when three eat at one table and speak Torah, it is like they are eating at God's table, as it says (Ezekiel 41), 'And he spoke to me saying, This is the table before God.'"

If three sit at the table and do not discuss Torah, it is as if they are dedicating their efforts to worthless idolatry, for the Name of God is never mentioned. Meals, instead of being part of the spiritual and moral aspects of living, become only acts of animal gratification. If, however, they were engaged in Torah, it would be as if they were eating in the presence of God Himself.

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124 A reference to idolatry.
125 Like the altar before God.
Rebbe Chanina ben Chachinai said, "The one who stays awake at night, the one who walks on his way alone and the one who empties his heart for vanity\(^{126}\), gives up his life."

The one who ponders useless matters at night or the one who walks alone at night in dangerous places without thinking Torah thoughts, and the one who daydreams about worthless subjects, puts his life in danger. Instead of utilizing those quiet moments for serious meditation and reflection, he wastes them on frivolous and idle thoughts. He is sinning against his own soul.

\(^{126}\) Without Torah.
Rebbe Nechunya ben Hakanna said, "Anyone who accepts upon himself the yoke of Torah will have the burden of the government\textsuperscript{127} and the yoke of daily drudgery\textsuperscript{128} removed. Anyone who casts off the yoke of Torah, will be burdened with the yokes of government and daily drudgery."

\textsuperscript{127} Toiling for them or giving them money.
\textsuperscript{128} He will not have to work hard for a living. Others will toil for him.
Rebbe Chalafta ben Dosa from Kfar Chanania\textsuperscript{129} said, "If ten sit and engage in Torah, the Divine Presence will be present among them, as it says (Psalms 82), 'God is present among the congregation of the Lord\textsuperscript{30}.' And from where do we learn that this will also occur among five? It says, (Amos 9), 'And His band\textsuperscript{31} on Earth is the foundation!'. And from where do we learn three? It says, (Psalms 82), 'From in the midst of the judges\textsuperscript{32} He shall judge.' And from where do we learn two? It says (Malachi 3), 'Then those who fear God shall speak one with another, and God shall pay attention, and listen, etc.' And from where do we learn even one? It says (Exodus 20), 'Anywhere I where I permit My Name to be remembered, I shall come to you and bless you.'"

If ten sit together and are engaged in Torah, God’s Holy Presence resides among them. This is true even for five, three, two or one. Five refers to three judges and the two litigants. Three refers to the three judges alone.\textsuperscript{30} Any group of ten men, united in accordance with the spirit of Judaism for truly Jewish causes, constitutes a congregation and represents, on a small scale, the entire Jewish community.

\textsuperscript{129} A town situated between the Upper and Lower Galilee.
\textsuperscript{30} There is no congregation of less than ten (Sanhedrin 1:6).
\textsuperscript{31} A band is held by the five fingers.
\textsuperscript{32} The Hebrew term אֱלֹהִים is also used for judges, nominally three (in a Beis Din). Alternatively, with three judges and two witnesses, God’s Holy Presence is in attendance.
Rebbe Elazar from Bartosa\textsuperscript{133} said, "Give to Him of His, since you and all of yours are His\textsuperscript{134}. So it says with David (I Chronicles 29): 'All is from You, and from Your hand, we gave to You.' Rebbe Shimon\textsuperscript{135} said, "If one was learning while he going on his way, and stops his learning to say, 'O, how pleasant is this tree' or 'how fine is this field', of him it is written that he causes his own demise."

Always give of yourself and your property for matters of Heaven, because you and everything you own, including your soul, are His and come from Him. All you have and all you have achieved are a result of the strength and means received from God. All you have was given to you only for the purpose of employing it to do the Will of God.

The one who was learning Torah while traveling through a perilous place and interrupts to admire a tree or a field, endangers his life, since it is just his Torah-learning which is what is protecting him there. More broadly, Torah protects us from danger. The physical beauties of nature all recede in the shadows of the higher beauty of God’s Teaching. The beauty and dignity of a human soul that is guided and enlightened by the spirit of God is a beauty and dignity that surpasses all Earthly beauty by far.

\textsuperscript{133} Possibly a Galilean village.

\textsuperscript{134} Everything is His.

\textsuperscript{135} More correctly, Rebbe Yaakov.
Rebbe Dostai son of Rebbe Yannai in the name of Rebbe Meir said, "Regarding anyone who forgets even one thing of his learning, it is written that he causes his own demise, as it says (Deut. 4), 'Be careful and take great care of your life lest you forget any of the matters you saw with your eyes'. If his learning was difficult for him, we have learned (ibid), 'And lest these be diverted from your heart all the days of your life!' From here we learn that he is not guilty with his life until he deliberately removes it from his heart".

Someone who forgets anything from his learning, since he did not review his learning, sins against his soul. He may also come to permit the forbidden and, thus, cause others to sin, as well.

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136 He is only guilty if he erases his learning from his mind intentionally.
Rebbe Chanina ben Dosa said, "Anyone whose fear of sinning takes precedence over his desire for wisdom, shall have his wisdom endure. Anyone whose wisdom takes precedence over his fear of sinning, shall not have his wisdom endure." He was wont to say, "Anyone whose deeds are greater than his wisdom, shall have his wisdom endure. Anyone whose wisdom is greater than his deeds, shall not have his wisdom endure."

The one whose fear of sinning is foremost in his mind will have his Torah wisdom preserved, while the one whose wisdom is more important to him than his fear of sinning will not have his wisdom preserved.

It is also true that if a man’s deeds exceed his Torah wisdom, his wisdom will endure, whereas if his wisdom exceeds his deeds, his wisdom will not endure.

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137 Mitzvos.
138 His knowledge of Torah.
139 He does not put his learning into practice.
He was wont to say, "If people are pleased with him, God is at ease with him, too. But, if people are displeased with him, so is God." Rebbe Dosa ben Harkinos said, "Morning sleep, mid-day wine, childish talk and attending the synagogues of the simple, ignorant masses removes a man from this world."

God likes amenable people, whereas He is uncomfortable with those who are generally disliked. A Jew who is honest is praised for his Torah-learning and his parents are praised for raising such a trustworthy son. God created men for a single, universal union of human beings beneath the reign of the Father of all Mankind. Unkind and hostile conduct toward other men is displeasing to God and is in direct contradiction to the goals intended by God to be attained through Mankind’s life together.

Sleeping late in the morning because of late-night escapades, drinking wine in the middle of the day when he should be most alert and mentally clear, engaging in childish conversations, and frequenting the synagogues of ignorant people where they speak of trivial matters, removes a person from this world. He is thoughtlessly squandering the most precious gift that has been given to man - time.

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140 Rebbe Chanina ben Dosa.
141 Typically, they did not eat in the afternoon.
142 Talking with children.
143 Who do not come there to pray or learn, but engage in idle talk.
Rebbe Elazar the Modaite\textsuperscript{144} said, "The one who desecrates holy things, the one who disgraces the holidays, the one who humiliates his fellow-man in public, the one who denies the covenant of Abraham, our Patriarch\textsuperscript{145}, may he rest in peace, and the one who interprets Torah in contradiction to the Halacha\textsuperscript{146}, even though he may have Torah knowledge and good deeds to his credit, has no share in the World to Come.

The one who desecrates that which is holy, such as desecrating the Sabbath in public or by working on Chol Hamoed, thus treating these as ordinary days, and the one who humiliates someone in public, and the one who denies the covenant of Abraham by concealing it, and the one who intentionally misinterprets or misquotes the Torah and the Halacha, even though they may have acquired Torah and have done good deeds, have no place in the World to Come, unless they fully repent before their deaths. They are guilty of contributing to undermining the future of God’s kingdom on earth.

\textsuperscript{144} From the city of Modi’im.
\textsuperscript{145} He does not fulfill the Commandment of circumcision.
\textsuperscript{146} He makes things up which are contrary to the Halacha. Alternatively, he disparages the Torah.
Rebbe Yishmael said, "Be amiable with a superior and pleasant with the dark-haired ones, and receive every person with joy."

Serve your elders and superiors with peace of mind. Execute the demands of the authorities swiftly. Be amiable with those of lesser standing or who are younger than you. Receive everyone with a pleasant demeanor.

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147 People who are sought to work for the ruling authorities [i.e., the young who still have the youthful hair color – RB].
Rebbe Akiva said, "Levity and light-headedness accustom a person to promiscuity. Tradition is a protective fence around the Torah. Tithing is a fence for wealth. Vows are a fence for abstinence. The fence for wisdom is silence."

Clowning and flippancy bring a person to immorality.

148 Including the Oral Torah.
He was wont to say, "How privileged is Man who was created in the Image. And it was a special act of favor that he was informed of this, as it says (Genesis 9), 'For in the image of God did He make Man.' How privileged are Israel that they are called 'children to God' as it says (Deut. 14), 'You are children to the Lord, your God.' So special are Israel that they were given this especially desirable medium of love when the world was created, as it says (Proverbs 4), 'For I have given you a good portion – My Torah. Do not abandon it.'"

How pleasant it is for Man to have been created in the image of God, for just because of this he became obligated to execute God’s Will. It is Man’s dignity and nobleness which raises him above all other creatures. Israel is privileged to be His children and to whom He has revealed His great affection and love. Israel is singularly cherished since it was specifically to them that God’s beloved Torah, the blueprint for the Creation, was given. Man’s task is to bring about moral Good in the world, which can only be attained through the Torah.

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149 Of God.
150 God informed Adam that he was formed in His image.
151 The Torah.
Fifteen

All\(^{152}\) is foreseen, freedom of choice\(^{153}\) has been granted, and according to goodness\(^{154}\) is the world judged. Everything is in accordance with most\(^{155}\) works.

All is known to God, and nothing done, even in secret, is hidden from Him. Paradoxically, Man has complete free-will to do whatever he wants, to choose right or wrong, to do good or bad. \(\heartsuit\) In fact, if it were not within Man’s power to do evil, were sin to hold no charms for him, indeed, Man would then not be human at all. \(\heartsuit\) God judges us for our choices. If, by and large, we do good and observe His commandments, He will be merciful with us.

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\(^{152}\) Rebbe Akiva here continues.

\(^{153}\) Although all is foreseen, Man has been granted free-will to choose to do good or evil.

\(^{154}\) In God’s goodness and His mercy.

\(^{155}\) Man is rewarded by the majority of his good deeds.
He was wont to say, "Everything is given on account, and a net has been spread over all of life. The store is open, the shopkeeper extends credit, the ledger is open, and the hand records therein. Anyone who wishes to borrow can come and borrow, but the collectors come out everyday and demand their due, whether they the people are aware of it or not. They have upon what to rely when exacting payment. The law is just, and everything has been prepared for the banquet."

Life is on loan, and God can reclaim it whenever He wants. We are like fish in a sea and the net of affliction and death has already been spread before us. It can scoop us up at any moment without notice or perception. But since we have free-will and we can choose to do good or bad, and make ourselves wholesome or polluted as we wish, we can escape the net by making the right choices. We can live a life of moderation or one of lack of restraint. Life is like an open store. We come in and take what we need and want. The storekeeper trusts his customers, but also records everything they take. Even when he is extremely busy, he still records everything. At the end of the day, everyone has to pay. Life is like taking an easy loan. We can borrow however much we like. But, the lender's collectors always turn up, usually without any warning, and demand payment. They can be very agonizing. This refers to the agents of God: illness and affliction. Sometimes the borrower remembers his debts and admits to them. But, sometimes he has long-forgotten them and cries out, “Injustice!” Nevertheless, the lender never forgets and always acts judiciously and righteously. Those who pay their debts will ultimately be rewarded, if not in this world then in the World to Come, while those from whom payment was not obtained in this world, will be made to pay in the World to Come.

156 Rebbe Akiva.
157 All man has been giving is on loan, and he will have to make an accounting as to what he did with it all.
158 Man is trapped like a fish in a net.
159 The world and all of life’s pleasures are available to him.
160 The collectors. All is written in the ledger.
161 Awaiting the righteous ones in the World to Come.
Rebbe Elazar ben Azariah said, "Without Torah\textsuperscript{162}, there is no Derech Eretz\textsuperscript{163}. Without Derech Eretz, there is no Torah. Without wisdom, there is no fear. Without fear\textsuperscript{164}, there is no wisdom. Without understanding\textsuperscript{165}, there is no knowledge. Without knowledge, there is no understanding. Without Torah\textsuperscript{166}, there is no Torah. Without Torah\textsuperscript{167}, there is no flour." He was wont to say, "The one whose wisdom exceeds his deeds is comparable with a tree which has many branches, but few roots. Comes a wind, and the tree is uprooted and upended, as it says (Jeremiah 17): 'He is like a solitary tree in the desert, and does not see when goodness comes; he lives on the parched soil in the wilderness, a salt-saturated and uninhabitable land. However, if his deeds exceed his wisdom, we compare him to a tree whose branches are few, but has many roots. Of him it is written there, 'He is like a tree planted by the waters which spreads out its roots toward the stream for water; he does not sense the heat, and his leaves remain fresh; he is not troubled in a year of drought, neither does he cease to bear fruit'.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{162} Without assigning Torah a place of importance.
\item \textsuperscript{163} Correct and ethical behavior.
\item \textsuperscript{164} Of sin.
\item \textsuperscript{165} Analyses.
\item \textsuperscript{166} Food, sustenance.
\item \textsuperscript{167} What is life without Torah?
\end{itemize}
Without Torah, there is no “Derech Eretz” - an orderly way of life – and there is no civilization or society. Without “Derech Eretz”, there is no Torah. Torah cannot truly exist in person who does not have exemplary personal attributes, faultless morality, and impeccable behavior. Without wisdom, there is no fear of Heaven. Without fear of Heaven, there is no wisdom. Without understanding, that is, the ability to analyze issues and draw inferences and conclusions, there is no knowledge. Without knowledge, that is, the ability to synthesize concepts, there is no understanding. Without sustenance, there is no Torah. Without Torah, there is no sustenance.

We can compare the one whose wisdom exceeds his deeds to a tree with many branches, but few roots. One swift wind and he is toppled. While the one whose deeds exceed his wisdom can be compared to a tree with few branches but many roots. No wind in the world can uproot him.
Rebbe Eliezer ben Chissma said, "The laws governing Kinin\textsuperscript{168} and Niddah\textsuperscript{169} are the really, true essences of the Halacha, whereas astronomy and numerologies are mere tantalizations to wisdom."

The minutiae of the Halacha are the essence of the Halacha. It is the observance of these details for which one receives reward. However, subjects such as star-gazing (tracking the Zodiac, calculating the equinoxes) and numerology are of lesser importance. Entertaining, but not very useful in and of themselves for most people, although they can bring a person to the more serious topics of Halacha. Nevertheless, both these topics do require an understanding of mathematics which sharpens the mind.

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\textsuperscript{168} The stringent laws governing bird-sacrifices and doubts about them.
\textsuperscript{169} The menstruant.
Ben Zoma said, "Who is wise? He who learns from all people, as it says (Psalms 119), 'From all my teachers, I have gained understanding; while Your testimonies are my pursuits.' Who is courageous? He who controls his impulses, as it says (Proverbs 16), 'Better is the one who holds back his anger than the strong man; better the one who rules over his spirit than the one who captures a city.' Who is rich? He who is content with his portion\(^\text{170}\), as it says (Psalms 128), 'When you enjoy the work of your hands, you shall be content, and it shall be good for you.' 'Well with you' – in this world; 'good for you' in the World to Come. Who is respected? He who respects other people, as it says (1 Samuel 2), 'Those who honor me, I honor, but those who despise me, shall be held in contempt.'"

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\(^{170}\) He makes no effort to chase wealth.
in control of his desires, and the one who does not anger. He who can subdue his passions is mightier than the bravest of warriors. Who is rich? The one who is content with his portion because the lust for money can never be satisfied. Who is honorable? The one who respects others. God honors those who honor Him.
Ben Azzai said, "Always run to do a simple Mitzvah (as you would to a more serious one), and flee from sin. For one Mitzvah tows with it another Mitzvah, and a sin drags with it another sin. For the reward of a Mitzvah is a Mitzvah, and the payment for a sin is a sin."

Rush to perform an easy Mitzvah as you would a more difficult one, and flee from sin, because the reward for a Mitzvah is the opportunity to perform another Mitzvah, while the punishment for one sin is another sin. Sinning dulls the keen edge of moral judgment and weakens resistance to future evil. Committing sins is easy for people, and people enjoy most sins. Distancing from God may accelerate as one moves away from Him.
He was wont to say, "Do not disgrace anyone nor deem anything worthless since there is no one who does not have his moment nor is there anything that does not have its place."

Never disgrace another person, and never divide people into higher and lower sects, because there is no person who does not have his moment, and there is no thing that does not have its place.
Rebbe Levitas of Yavne said, "Be of exceedingly humble spirit since the ‘hope’ of every human is the maggot." Rebbe Yochanan ben Beroka said, "Anyone who disgraces the Name of Heaven in secret shall be paid back in public; whether he desecrated the Name intentionally or even by accident."

Unlike all other attributes where a person should attempt to find the middle ground, regarding humility, one must be exceptionally humble and modest, for nothing is more despicable and repugnant than pride, conceit and arrogance. Since egotism is a common problem, we must be very wary of it. What are we, after all? In the end, the worms are waiting for us, and we will decay.

Whoever disgraces the Name of Heaven in private by secretly sinning surmising that no one will find out about it, will ultimately be exposed. Actually, people like to boast to others of their sins as an arrogant show of defiance of Heaven. It makes no difference if his desecration is intentional or not, because no one is excused from being cognizant of the fact that there is a God who is everywhere and who sees and hears everything.
Rebbe Yishmael his son said, "Anyone who learns Torah to teach it, shall be given the opportunity to both learn and teach. Anyone who learns in order to put it into practice, shall be given the opportunity to learn, teach, observe and do; and he will be protected from sinning. However, the one who learns in order to do, will be given the opportunity to both learn and teach. And so would Hillel say, "He who makes use of the crown of Torah shall pass away." From here we learn that anyone who personally benefits from the words of Torah removes his existence from the world.

Whoever learns in order to teach, will be given the opportunity to both learn and teach. However, the one who learns in order to do, will be given the opportunity to learn, teach, observe and do; and he will be protected from sinning.

(Never set yourself apart from the community and do not act as counsel to the judges.) Never learn Torah so that people will call you rabbi or for the honor or to be able to rule over others. Nor should you learn Torah because you think that that will lead to a good job.

Anyone who ascends by means of the Crown of Torah does the opposite from the intention of God. God intended Man to be subservient to Torah, not that Torah be subservient to Man. From this we learn that anyone who benefits from the Torah removes himself from this world.

171 [His son or the son of Rabbi Yosse – RB].
172 The Mitzvos.
173 [Some additions of the Mishna add: – Do not set yourself apart from the community and do no act as a counsel of the judges. –RB].
174 Words of Torah.
175 Boast about.
Rebbe Yosse said, "Anyone who honors the Torah shall himself be honored by people. Anyone who desecrates the Torah shall himself be debased by other people."

Whoever honors the Torah will himself be honored by others. ♦️ Anyone who disgraces the Torah, will be disgraced. ♦️ How should you honor the Torah? By escorting the Sefer Torah when it is being carried to and from the Ark, handling it with reverence, and listening intently when it is being read. Also, by showing that every letter of it has meaning, and that there is meaning even where the letters are missing.
Rebbe Yishmael his son said, "The one who hides himself from the judgment unyokes himself from enmity\textsuperscript{176}, thievery\textsuperscript{177} and false oaths\textsuperscript{178}, while the one who boasts\textsuperscript{179} of his decision-making is a fool, wicked and has a haughty spirit."

He who shuns judicial office rids himself of hatred, robbery and perjury. The judge who brings the litigants to amicable compromise avoids having the losing litigant hate him for finding him guilty, stealing wrongfully by compelling him to pay, and causing unnecessary oath-taking. Here we are referring to one unfit to administer justice. Also, judges who issue complicated and convoluted judgments are fools, apathetic, and arrogant. This could also apply to those people who conceitedly deliver verdicts for themselves without going to a legitimate court for judgment.

\textsuperscript{176} From the one he found guilty.
\textsuperscript{177} For he may have found guilty the innocent one [who now has to pay his fellow], and would then himself be a thief.
\textsuperscript{178} Obliging someone to take an oath. The man may then perjure himself and swear falsely.
\textsuperscript{179} He is arrogant.
He was wont to say, "Do not judge by yourself for there is no single judge but One. Do not say\textsuperscript{180}, 'Accept my opinion' since they have free-will, and are not bound by you\textsuperscript{181}.

Never be haughty, even if you are an expert in a topic nor think that you can adjudicate without consultation with others. For the only One Judge we have is God. A judge must never compel his fellow judges to accept his reasoning simply because it was he who invited the others to come together to judge with him. Rather, he must acquiesce to the final ruling of the majority. Everyone errs, even the greatest and sharpest of sages.

\textsuperscript{180} To your fellow judges.

\textsuperscript{181} If they are the majority, they can compel you to accept their verdict.
Rebbe Yonoson said, "Anyone who observes the Torah when poor will ultimately observe it when rich, while anyone who fails to observe the Torah when rich will fail to observe it when poor."

Whoever observes the Torah in poverty when he is troubled about his sustenance and is pressed for time and has always to look for work, will ultimately be able to observe the Torah in wealth and comfort. Anyone who violates the Torah when wealthy when he had the time to learn and observe the Commandments but failed to do so, will end up violating it in poverty and desperation.
Rebbe Meir said, "Reduce your involvement in business and engage yourself in Torah. Be of a lowly spirit before all men. If you neglect and avoid Torah, you shall have a lot of 'avoidings' to deal with. But, if you toil in Torah, He has much reward awaiting you."

Engage in as little commerce and affairs of the world as is necessary. Rather spend most of your time learning Torah. Accustom yourself to a more modest standard of living than the social circles in which you move. Know that you can learn from everyone, even from someone who is much less learned than you. If you relax in your Torah-learning, you will subject yourself to many forces which will pull you further away from this task. But, if you toil in Torah, you will have an enormous reward. Your reward is commensurate with how hard you toiled in learning, and not for how much you actually learned.

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182 Even someone smaller (less) than you.
183 You will be confronted with many things which will prevent you from doing your task.
Rebbe Eliezer ben Yaakov said, "When a person does one Mitzvah, he acquires an advocate, but when he commits a sin, he acquires an accuser. Repentance and good deeds are like shutters before punishments. Rebbe Yochanan HaSandler said, "Any congregation assembled for a holy purpose shall endure\(^{184}\), while any group brought together not for the sake of Heaven shall not endure."
Rebbe Elazar ben Shamua said, "May the honor of your students be as dear to you as your own; may the honor of your fellow be like the reverence of your rebbe and may the reverence of your rebbe by like the fear of Heaven."

The honor of your student should be as dear to you as your own honor. The honor of your friend should be the same as the honor you have for your teacher. The honor you have for your teacher should be the same as the reverence you have for Heaven. In our zeal to teach and discipline, we must never allow ourselves to degrade or injure the dignity of a disciple. We must not let the intimacy we have with our equals diminish our honor for them.
Rebbe Yehuda said, "Be careful in your learning since any mistake in learning shall be counted as intentional." Rebbe Shimon said, "There are three crowns: the crown of Torah, the crown of the priesthood and the crown of kingship. But the crown of a good name exceeds them all."

Be precise and investigative in your learning, because even inadvertent errors in learning are reckoned as intentional sins. Improper and superficial study or indifference when studying Torah is sinful.

Our Sages spoke of three crowns – the crown of Torah, the crown of the priesthood, and the crown of kingship. But there is actually a fourth one, the crown of a good name, which exceeds all the others. All the other three are without value unless they are linked with the crown of a good name. Not everyone can be a priest or a king, but everyone can learn Torah. It is of the greatest of achievements for a person to die having earned a “good name” during his life.

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185 Explaining and understanding the Halacha and instruction.
186 One who errs in instruction because he did know the reason for a Halacha is considered as an intentional violator.
Rebbe Nehorai\(^{187}\) said, “Rather you should be exiled\(^{188}\) to a place where there is already Torah and do not say that it will follow you\(^{189}\), and that your associates\(^{190}\) will establish it in your possession\(^{191}\); and do not rely upon your own understanding\(^{192}\).”

Move only to a place where there is an existing Torah community, one with an indigenous population of Torah scholars, even at the sacrifice of living somewhere you would have a better income. Don’t assume that if you are the first in a new place others will follow and build a community around you, even if you are a top scholar yourself. Seek out a place where the Torah is diligently studied, even if it means leaving your home that you love. Whatever skill you have will grow and survive only if you associate with people of similar interests. If you lack such companionship, your talent - in this instance the knowledge of Torah - will eventually atrophy.

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\(^{187}\) [Rabbi Elazar ben Arach – Rashi].

\(^{188}\) Move to a place where there are scholars from whom you can learn Torah.

\(^{189}\) ‘I shall wait for Torah here, and a rabbi will come to me.’

\(^{190}\) Who left you to learn.

\(^{191}\) [A difficult phrase. R’ Pinchas Kahati in his commentary, quoting the Meiri, says that this means that you will have to ask your colleagues, who did go to a place of Torah, your questions since they learned on your behalf, as it were, and they will then have to explain things to you. Rather, you should go to a place of Torah to learn it yourself, directly from the rabbis, and not have to rely on the ‘students’. –RB]

\(^{192}\) Saying that I understand things myself, and I do not need a rabbi.
We are unable to fathom why the wicked succeed in this world and continue to flourish, while the righteous suffer. This is surely one of the greatest enigmas of life. Rebbe Yannai said, "We cannot comprehend why the wicked are calm nor why the righteous are afflicted." Rebbe Masya ben Chorosh said, "Always be the first to greet other people. Rather be a tail to the lions than the head of the foxes."

We are unable to fathom why the wicked succeed in this world and continue to flourish, while the righteous suffer. This is surely one of the greatest enigmas of life. To determine the relationship between the visible fate of a man and his moral worthiness or lack thereof is utterly beyond our power. We do not have sufficient insight either to determine a person’s moral worth or worthlessness, or to judge where that which befalls him is indeed a blessing or a calamity.

Always be the first to extend greetings to everyone, but everyone. Better to be the tail to lions than the head of foxes. That is, it is better for someone to be the follower of great and learned people than the leader of lesser people. After all, the tail of a lion is still part of the lion, while the head of a fox is a part of the fox. Seek the company of those who are superior to you both spiritually and morally even though you would occupy an inferior position in their midst and would have to submit to their guidance.

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193 Have it easy.
194 They suffer.
195 [or Matisyoh or Matisyohu – RB]
Rebbe Yaacov said, "This world can be compared to an antechamber to the World to Come. Therefore, prepare yourself in the antechamber so that you can enter the banquet hall."

This world is like a corridor leading to the World to Come. Prepare yourself in the hallway in order that you can enter the throne room of the king.

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196 With good deeds.
He\textsuperscript{197} was wont to say, "Better one hour of repentance and good deeds in this world than a lifetime in the World to Come\textsuperscript{198}. Better one hour of spiritual contentment in the World to Come than a lifetime in this world."

Better one hour of repentance and doing good deeds in this world than life in the World to Come. \textsuperscript{197} This world is where we prepare ourselves by faithfully discharging our physical, moral and spiritual tasks. What was not attained here cannot be made up in the Next World. \textsuperscript{198} The World to Come is a place of blissful happiness. All the joys and pleasures which even the longest lifetime on earth could afford cannot outweigh even one single hour of spiritual satisfaction such as is found in the World to Come.

\textsuperscript{197} [Rebbe Yaacov - RB].
\textsuperscript{198} In the World to Come, no one can repent nor perform good deeds.
Rebbe Shimon ben Elazar said, "Make no attempt to placate your friend in the hour of his anger; do not try to comfort a person when his dead lies before him; do not discuss the matter with someone at the time he made a vow; and do not visit someone at the moment of his defeat."

Make no attempt to pacify an angry man. Do not console someone who is at the height of his mourning, because at that moment he expects you to mourn with him and not help him rationalize his loss. Do not try to help someone find a way out of his vow at a time when he is highly intent on fulfilling that vow. Your attempt will only backfire and strengthen his resolve. Good intentions alone are an insufficient excuse and justification for all things. Consider the timing. Avoid looking at someone when he is sinning for this will only shame him. Do not go out of your way to visit someone who suffered something unpleasant if you know that he would rather remain alone and unseen in his distress.

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199 He will reject your attempt to soothe him.
200 Wait until after the burial.
201 Even if you try to release him from his vow by finding some sort of loophole for him, at the moment he made it, he will reject your efforts saying he is determined to keep it anyway.
202 Just when he failed, and is most embarrassed.
Shmuel Hakoton said\textsuperscript{203} (Proverbs 24), "Do not be jubilant when your enemy falters nor rejoice when he fails. God sees you, and this that you do is bad in His eyes, and He shall rescind His anger from your fellow".

Do not rejoice in your enemy’s downfall nor glee in his failings. God sees you, and this is evil in His eyes, and He will be angry with you.

\textsuperscript{203} He was accustomed to saying these verses.
Elisha ben Avuyah said, "Teaching a child is compared to writing on a new, blank sheet of paper, whereas teaching a mature person is like writing on an erased sheet of paper." Rebbe Yose bar Yehuda from Kfar Bavli said, "One who learns from children is compared to someone who eats unripened grapes and drinks wine from the winepress, whereas the one who learns from the elders is compared to one who eats fully-ripened grapes and drinks old wine." Rebbe said, "Do not look at the jug, but what is in it. There are new containers with old wine, and old ones which are empty."

To what can we compare the teaching of children? To writing on a blank sheet of paper. To what can we compare the teaching of an older person? To writing on a page which had been erased. Old minds are prejudiced and not easily impressed.

To what can we compare someone who learns from children? To someone who eats unripe grapes and drinks wine directly from the winepress, that is, its processing is incomplete. To what can we compare someone who learns from an old person? To someone who eats ripened grapes, and drinks mature, mellowed wine.

Don’t look at the container, rather look at its contents. There are new containers filled with old wine, and old containers which do not have even a little something new inside. Rabbi Meir modifies the previous Mishna saying that that rule is not universally applicable. Some young minds are mature, while some old ones are not.

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204 It makes a permanent impression.
205 Near Sidon.
206 Rebbe Yehuda HaNassi [or Reb Meir – RB].
Rebbe Elazar HaKapor said, "Envy, lust and a desire for honor remove a person from the world".

Envy of the success of sinners, desire for physical pleasures, and the pursuit of personal honor remove a person from this world. These are the sources for almost all the sins in the world. Envy leads to thievery, desire for pleasure leads to eating wrong foods and the engaging in immoral sexual unions, and the pursuit of honor leads to pride, disputes, and humiliation.
He was wont to say, "All who are born will die, the dead will be resurrected, and all living beings will be judged. Know, inform and contemplate that He is God, He is the fashioner, He is the creator, He understands, He is the judge, He is the witness, He is the prosecutor, and He will judge. Blessed be He that there is no injustice, no forgetting, no partiality, and no bribery; for everything is His. Everything is done in accordance with the accounting and do not trust your inclination, since the grave is surely your refuge. For against your will were you created (and against your will you were born), and against your will you live, and against your will you will die, and against your will will you have to give a full reckoning and accounting before the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He."
We were all born to die, but those who have died will be resurrected. Everyone will be judged. In the end, everyone will know there is the one God who is fashioner, creator, and all-knowing. He is judge, witness, and prosecutor. And He will judge. A human being may be formed and fashioned but, unlike a vessel, he is never “finished”. God’s verdict is just. All is revealed before Him. No one is absolved of being judged. He takes no bribes. This refers to someone who might “offer” God the performance of a Mitzvah in return for erasing a sin. Rather, He rewards for each Mitzvah and punishes for each sin. Everything is His. All sins, small and large, will be accounted for and the sinner punished. Don’t be tempted by your evil inclination which argues that with death all will be forgiven. You were created against your will, you were born against your will, you live against your will, you will die against your will, and you will give accounting for your deeds before the King of Kings, blessed be He.
The world was created with ten sayings\textsuperscript{216}. What do we learn from this since the world could have been created in one utterance? It was done this way in order to emphatically penalize the wicked who destroy the world, which was create in ten sayings, and well-reward the righteous\textsuperscript{217} who sustain the world, which was created with ten sayings.

God created the world with ten utterances such as, “Let there be light”. Ten and not one, so that those who destroy the world will be punished tenfold and the righteous who uphold the world will be rewarded tenfold. ◇ Who destroys the world? Anyone who kills a person. ◇ God made such an effort to create this world, and this one destroys it with one criminal act. ◇ Creation with a single utterance would have fixed Man on the same plane with that of all the other works of creation. Man is the final work of creation, the goal and summit of the whole, in whom all of creation culminates.

\textsuperscript{216} Ten commands.
\textsuperscript{217} In whose merit the world is sustained.
The ten sayings were:

1. Breishis – “Creation!”
2. “Let there be light”.
3. “Let there be a firmament”.
4. “Let the waters gather”.
5. “Let there be vegetation”.
6. “Let there be sources of light”.
7. “Let the waters be swarming with life”.
8. “Let the land bring forth life”.
9. “Let us make Man”.
10. “Behold, I have given you…

Then God said to all, “Be fruitful and multiply”.

The reason there were ten generations from Adam to Noah was in order to inform us of how patient God is, for each generation constantly irritated Him until He finally brought upon them the waters of the flood. There were ten generations from Noah to Abraham in order to inform us how patient He is, for each generation continuously angered Him, until Abraham came and reaped the reward due all of them.

There were ten generations from Adam to Noah in order to teach how patient God was with Man, and how slowly He angered with Man, until He brought the Flood. ♦ His patience allowed them time to repent.

There were ten generations from Noah to Abraham in order to teach how patient God was with them, even though they angered Him. Abraham then came and received all their rewards. That is, Abraham did all the good they should have done in this world and was rewarded in the Next World with the rewards they all should have received. ♦ Abraham saved the world from destruction.

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218 As enumerated in Genesis Chapter 5.
219 As enumerated in Genesis Chapter 11, verses 10-26.
Abraham, our Patriarch, may peace be upon him, was tested ten times and withstood each one, in order to inform us how beloved was Abraham, our Patriarch, may peace be upon him.

Abraham was tested ten times, and passed each one of them. God did this to prove how much he loved Abraham, for then God could reward Abraham ten times.

The ten tests were (the Rambam lists those marked with an *):

1. The furnace he was tossed into in Ur Casdim by Nimrod.
2. Leaving his homeland and family*.
3. The famine*.
4. Marrying Pharaoh’s daughter Hagar.
5. The war of the kings*.
6. He was shown prophetically that his descendents would be slaves.
7. His circumcision*.
8. Avimelech’s abduction of Sarah*.
9. Evicting Hagar* and Ishmael*.
10. The binding of Isaac*.

Another version substitutes Pharaoh’s abducting Sarah*, and lists divorcing Hagar and evicting Ishmael as two separate tests, and does not count the furnace (1.) and the prophecy of slaves (6.).

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220 By God.
The Gra has the following list:

1. When Abraham, our forefather, was born, all the mighty ones in the kingship wished to kill him. So they buried him in the ground for thirteen years, and he did not see sunlight or moonlight that entire time.
2. He was captive for ten years and then thrown into the furnace, as it says, “As you were taken from Ur Casdim”, meaning the furnace of Casdim.
3. Leaving his home and homeland.
4. The famine.
5. The taking of Sarah.
6. The war of the kings.
7. When God told Abram in a vision not to fear for He is his shield.
8. His circumcision.
9. When he evicted Hagar and Ishmael.
10. The binding of Isaac.
Ten miracles in Egypt and ten on the sea were performed on behalf of our forefathers. The Holy One, blessed be He, brought ten plagues down on the Egyptians and ten on the sea. With ten trials did our forefathers try God, blessed be He, in the wilderness, as it says (Numbers 14), "And they tested me ten times, and they did not listen to My voice."

There were ten miracles in Egypt and ten on the sea. The ten miracles on the sea were:

1. The sea split.
2. The waters formed a protective tent for the people.
3. The sea-floor dried and hardened so that the people could pass without sinking in mud.
4. When the pursuing Egyptians came, the sea-floor reverted to a slippery mire.
5. The sea-floor became like small, decorative tiles.
6. The sea-walls became hard like stone.
7. There were twelve separate gaps, one for each tribe.
8. The sea-walls were transparent and jewel-like; the light of the Pillar of Fire was visible to all.
9. The waters were sweet and drinkable.
10. The waters they did not drink froze in place.
God brought ten plagues on the Egyptians in Egypt and ten plagues on the sea.

The ten miracles in Egypt were that we were saved from the ten plagues.

The ten plagues in Egypt were:

1. Blood.
2. Frogs.
3. Lice.
5. Disease.
7. Hail.
8. Locusts.
10. The death of the first-born.

The ten plagues on the sea were:

1. The horses and their riders were thrown into the waters.
2. Pharaoh’s chariots and the host were cast in the sea.
3. The choicest Egyptians drowned.
4. The flood-waters covered them.
5. They sunk into the depths like a stone.
6. God’s Right Hand shattered them.
7. Those who rose up against God were thrown down.
8. God sent forth His glowing wrath and consumed them like straw.
9. The sea enveloped them.
10. They sank like lead in mighty waters.

The ten times our forefathers tested God because of their lack of trust in Him in the desert where, given its natural desolation, they assumed that God had abandoned them. In accordance with the Rambam, these were at:

1. The Reed Sea regarding their leaving a comfortable life in Egypt for the desert (Ex. 14:11).
2. Marah in the wilderness where the waters were bitter and undrinkable (Ex. 15:24).
3. The Sin Desert, also about leaving Egypt for the desert (Ex. 16:2).
4. (Ex. 16:20) and
5. (16:27) regarding the Manna.
6. Refidim regarding a lack of drinking water (Ex. 17:2).
7. Chorev (with the Golden Calf).
8. Taberah (Numbers 11:1) and
9. Kivros HaTaava (11:4) complaining about the good food they miss from Egypt.
10. The Paran Desert upon hearing the report of the spies (Numbers 14:2).

Unlike other codes of religious law, the Jewish “religion” and Jewish Law did not originate within the people but were handed to it from without – from God.
Ten miracles were performed for our forefathers in the Temple. No woman ever miscarried because of the aroma of the sacrificial meat; no holy sacrificial meat ever had a foul smell; no fly was ever seen in the Temple butchery; the High Priest never experienced a nocturnal emission on Yom Kippur; rains never extinguished the burning pyre on top of the Altar; no wind ever overpowered the smoke column rising from the Altar; no disqualification was ever found in the Omer or with the Two Loaves or with the Shewbread, people would stand closely bunched up, yet still had plenty of room to bow down; no snake or scorpion ever injured anyone in Jerusalem; and no one ever said to his fellow, "This place is too crowded for me to stay overnight in Jerusalem".

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221 Offered on the 16th of Nissan.
222 Offered on Shavuos.
223 Arranged each Shabbos.
Our forefathers were blessed with ten miracles in the Temple:

1. No woman ever miscarried due to the smell of the sacrificial meat.
2. The sacrificial meat never putrefied. This may refer to certain portions of the sacrifices waiting on the top of the Altar for two or three days to be burned due to a large backlog.
3. No fly was ever seen in the butcher’s quarters.
4. In the first Temple, no Kohen Godol on Yom Kippur was ever disqualified due to seminal impurity.
5. No rain ever quenched the flames of the pyre on the Altar.
6. No wind ever distorted the straight column of the rising smoke above the Altar.
7. No disqualification was ever found in the Omer offering or with the two loaves or with the showbread.
8. Although the people were crowded in the Temple courtyard, they always had enough room to prostrate themselves.
9. No one in Jerusalem was ever injured by a snake or scorpion bite.
10. No one ever complained that he did not have lodging in Jerusalem.

These miraculous occurrences bore testimony to the constant presence of God both in the Holy City and in the Sanctuary, safeguarding the sacred rites performed in these holy places.
Ten things were created before Shabbos\(^{224}\) at twilight. The opening of the Earth, the opening of the well, the mouth of the donkey, the rainbow, the Manna, the staff, the Shamir worm, writing, script\(^{225}\), and the Tablets of the Law. Some say, also injurious things\(^{226}\), Moses' grave, Abraham, our forefather's, ram, and some say even the tongs\(^{227}\) which made the tongs.

Ten things were created on the evening of the Sabbath of Creation at twilight:

1. **The abyss which would swallow up Korah and his band.**
   - Mutiny against Moses or denial of his mission was a criminal act.
2. **Miriam's traveling-well which provided water for Israel in the wilderness.**
   - Their every drink of water was a testimony to the presence of Divine Providence.
3. **The ability of Balaam’s donkey to speak.**
   - In order to humble that man of brilliant speech who, led by base passion and impudent conceit, sought to misuse his human speech to curse a whole nation.
4. **The rainbow which was a sign from God after the Flood that He would never again destroy the entire world by water.**
   - This is an eternal symbol of God’s patience with human error.
5. **The Manna.**
   - The Manna bore testimony to the care with which God remembers every living thing, and which was to teach men to trust and cheerfully obey Him.

\(^{224}\) The first Shabbos of Creation. The facility to bring forth these supernatural things in the future was implanted at that time.

\(^{225}\) The engraved letters on the Tablets. Some say this means the etching pen.

\(^{226}\) Shades and spirits.

\(^{227}\) Which, therefore, had to have been made in Heaven.
6. Moses’ staff with which he performed his miracles. As a visible sign of God’s intervention in His own world order to train man and to chastise him for his disobedience and his pusillanimity.

7. The stone-eating Shamir worm which hewed the jewels of the Ephod and Choshen and the stones for Solomon's Temple.

8. The form of the lettering on the Tablets of the Law. The miraculous writing and tablets were testaments they were the works of God.

9. The ability to read the writing on the Tablets from any of its four sides.

10. The Tablets themselves.

Some say that the injurious spirits, Moses’ grave, and Abraham’s ram were also created then. Some would like to say that the first pair of tongs was also created then. Since tongs can only be fashioned by forging, there needed to be a primordial pair to hold the red-hot metal in the fire. How else can that tool have been formed? But, an opinion in the Talmud (Pesachim 54a) says the tongs could have been fashioned in a mold.

The six days of Creation embrace the visible world while the seventh day, the Sabbath, is a memorial to the unseen Creator and serves to train Man to recognize his unseen Lord and of his moral destiny. These items form a transition between the physical world and the Sabbath.

The location of Moses’ grave is hidden to us so as to prevent, with all ceaseless pilgrims who would have come, the rise of a cult of quasi-idolatry which would have been most detrimental itself to our spiritual welfare.

The ram is a symbol of Man’s selfless sacrifice to God.
Seven things are characteristic of the dumbbell, and seven of the wise man. The wise man does not speak first before someone who is greater in wisdom and experience than he; he does not interrupt his friend when he is speaking; he does not rush to respond; he asks to the point and answers to the point; he speaks to the first matter first and the latter matter last; of that which he did not learn he says, "I have not learned that"; and he acknowledges the truth. The opposite of all of these are the traits of a stupid person.

Seven characteristics are found in a boor, and seven are found in a wise man.

The wise man:

1. Never speaks before someone who is wiser and more experienced than he.
3. Always answers deliberately and logically, and indicates when his answers are those he learned from his teacher and when his answers are his own.
4. Always asks to the subject and responds to the issue.
5. Always answers questions in the order asked or he addresses the more important issues first.
6. Is never embarrassed to acknowledge his ignorance of some matter.
7. Always acknowledges the truth, that is, he admits when he was wrong and does not remain stubbornly loyal to his position. He is ready and willing to concede that he made an error and was wrong.

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228 He contemplates the question before responding.
229 About the matter at hand.
Now the boor has the opposite attributes [per RB]:

1. He has to speak first.
2. He constantly interrupts others when they are speaking.
3. He responds without thinking.
4. His answers have nothing to do with the questions.
5. His responses are mixed up.
6. He never admits that he doesn’t know.
7. He never admits that he was wrong.
Seven types of punishments came upon the world due to seven sorts of sins. If some people tithe and others do not, there will be a drought - some will be hungry, and some will be satiated. If everyone stops tithing, there will be the hunger of disturbances, and a drought. If everyone stops taking Challah, hunger of annihilation will come. Pestilence comes to the world for those death sentences mentioned in the Torah which are not within the purview of the courts, and due to violations regarding produce of the Sabbatical year. Sword comes to the world because of painful court decisions (delays in justice), court injustices (perversion of justice), and because Torah was taught incorrectly and not in accordance with Halacha.

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230 Wars.
231 Everyone stops taking Challah.
232 People will be so hungry that they will resort to mass killings of other people.
233 The courts were unable to judge violators.
234 People did not make their fields ownerless in the Sabbatical year.
235 The courts knew the Law, but did not rule.
236 The courts permitted the forbidden, etc.
There are seven kinds of punishments which come to this world corresponding to seven types of sins:

1. If some people tithe and some do not, famine will come; some will have food and some will starve.
2. If no one tithes, war will come and everyone will starve or they will eat but not be satiated.
3. If no one takes Challah, a drought will come, and people will starve.
4. If society is filled with people deserving the death penalty, but the courts do not convict or the Laws of the Sabbatical Year are not observed, pestilence will come.
5. If the courts take bribes, or delay or pervert justice, or teachers teach Torah incorrectly by permitting what is forbidden and forbidding what is permitted, war will come. If the Jewish State carries out its Divine mission, it will have Divine support against all enemy powers and no nation will dare attack it. But if the Jewish State should cast off its task and destiny or put it to wrongful use, it will thereby become a nation at the mercy of fate just like all the other states of the world, and God will withdraw His protection from it. Once Divine protection is denied the Jewish State, hostile powers will not hesitate to wield the sword against it.
6. If people are swearing falsely (perjury) or if there is desecration of the Name of Heaven, such as by intentionally sinning in public, and others learn from this, dangerous beasts will come. By indifference to the sacred nature of a vow, he will deny his allegiance to God or actually contravene it. The beast will no longer view this man as its superior.
7. If there is idolatry or immorality or murder or people are working their fields during the Sabbatical year, exile will come. The Land has been turned over to us by the Ruler and Owner with the explicit stipulation that we acknowledge His sovereignty and carry out His Will as laid down in His Law.
Wild animals\textsuperscript{237} come to the world because of vain oaths (perjury), and profanation of the Name\textsuperscript{238}. Exile comes to the world because of idolatry, immorality, bloodshed and failure to maintain the land fallow\textsuperscript{239}. Pestilence is more severe during four periods: during the fourth year, the seventh year, at the conclusion of the seventh year, and after the Chag\textsuperscript{240} every year. During the fourth year, because of failure to observe the laws of tithing for the poor during the third year. During the seventh year, due to failure to observe the laws of tithing for the poor during the sixth year. After the seventh year, because of failure to observe the laws of fruits during the Sabbatical year, and after the Chag each year, because of theft of the gifts\textsuperscript{241} designated for the poor.

Pestilence occurs during four periods: During the fourth and seventh years of the Sabbatical cycle, at the end of the Sabbatical cycle, and after every Succos. During the fourth and seventh years, because people did not give the Tithe for the Poor in the third and sixth years. After the seventh year, because people did not make ownerless their fruits for the poor. After Succos of each year, because people were not careful in distributing to the poor their due. This is thievery.

\textsuperscript{237} Wild animals and Exile are a continuation of the theme of the previous Mishna, and are printed there in other editions – RB.

\textsuperscript{238} This is particularly vile.

\textsuperscript{239} Plowing and sowing during the seventh year.

\textsuperscript{240} Succos.

\textsuperscript{241} - gleanings, forgotten sheaves and corners, one or two grapes or clusters of smallish grapes.
Four characteristics are found amongst men: There are those who say, What is mine is mine, and what is yours is yours. Such a person has an average character, but some say this is the character of Sodom. There are those who say, What is mine is yours, but what is yours is mine. This person is uncultured. There are those who say, What is mine is yours, and what is yours is yours. Such a person is pious. And there those who say, What is mine is mine, and what is yours is mine. Such a person is wicked.

Four attributes are found in Man:

1. The one who says what is mine is mine, and what is yours is yours. This is an ordinary attribute because although he does not prevent his fellow from enjoying that fellow’s own property or deny him his pleasures, neither does he invite his friend to come and benefit from what he himself has. Moreover, he arrogantly says that he does not want to have any part of his fellow’s graciousness or beneficence. Some suggest that this is an evil attribute because maybe his friend needs him and use of his resources.

2. The one who says what is mine is yours and what is yours is mine. This is an ignoble attribute. It indicates a boorish person who does not understand and respect the concept of private property and privacy.

3. The one who says what is mine is yours and what is yours is yours is virtuous. This man is supremely altruistic. Justice is the foundation of society, and mercy is its finishing touch.

4. The one who says what is yours is mine and what is mine is mine is wicked. Such a person is selfish and egocentric.

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242 He is neither righteous nor evil.
243 Who were exceedingly miserly and misanthropic.
244 He takes no note of what belongs to whom.
Four types of temperaments are found amongst men\textsuperscript{245}. Easy to anger, but easy to appease – such a person’s loss is greater than his gain\textsuperscript{246}; hard to anger and a hard to appease – his reward is greater than his loss; hard to anger, but easy to appease – he is virtuous; and, easy to anger, but difficult to appease – he is evil.

Four innate dispositions are found amongst men.

1. The one who is quick to anger about everything, but is equally quick to calm down. Since he gets angry all the time, his loss is greater than his gain because as quickly as he became calm, he will soon again anger. Some say the opposite.
2. The one who rarely angers, but if he does he has a hard time in being pacified. His reward is greater than his loss because, in the end, he does control his anger. Some say the opposite.
3. The one who rarely angers, but if he does he immediately returns to a tranquil, peace of mind. He has our highest admiration.
4. The one who angers quickly and has a hard-time calming down and purging his fury. He is depraved.

\textsuperscript{245} There is basic disagreement regarding how to read these first two sayings resulting in very different understandings of the intended meaning of this Mishna. See, for instance, Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch’s commentary on this Mishna. –RB.

\textsuperscript{246} His gain of being quick to be pacified is lost because of his quickness to anger.
Four types of temperaments are found among students. Quick to perceive and quick to forget — his loss is greater than his gain; slow to perceive, but slow to forget — his reward is greater than his loss; quick to perceive and slow to forget — he is wise; and, slow to perceive, and quick to forget — he has a bad portion.

Four natures are found in students:

1. The one who is quick to learn, but quickly forgets. He loses more than he gains.
2. The one who is slow to learn, but slow to forget. His gain exceeds his loss.
3. The one who is quick to learn and slow to forget. He is blessed with a wonderful gift.
4. The one who is slow to learn and forgets quickly. He has a misfortune.

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247 He learns fast.
248 His learning.
249 In life.
Four sorts of attitudes exist regarding those who give charity. The one who is willing to give, but begrudges others giving – he has a stingy eye regarding others; others should give, but not him – he is stingy for himself; he is willing to give and others should give, as well – he is virtuous; and, the one who is stingy to give and he doesn’t want others to give, either – he is just plain wicked.

There are four types of people regarding the giving of charity:

1. The one who gives, but discourages others to give. He is not good since he does not want others to be rewarded for being charitable.
2. The one who wants and encourages others to give, but he himself does not give. He is stingy.
3. The one who encourages others to give and he himself gives. He is righteous.
4. The one who dissuades or prevents others from giving, and he does not give. He is malevolent.

It is primarily that wealth which is spent on good works that truly becomes the permanent possession of the giver, benefiting him by advancing his eternal salvation.
There are four sorts of people regarding going to the Study Hall\textsuperscript{250}. There is the one who goes to learn, but does not put anything\textsuperscript{251} into practice – he, at least, gets a reward for making the effort to go there; he who observes, but does not go\textsuperscript{252} – he is rewarded for his observance; he who goes and learns, and he observes – he is virtuous; and, he who neither goes to learn nor observes – he is impious.

There are four types who go to the Beis Medrash to study Torah.

1. The one who goes regularly and attends Torah lectures, but is unable to learn or did not understand the lesson. This may be the one who goes but does not put his learning into practice. He receives reward for attending the lectures.

2. The one who learns at home, on his own. This may be the one who practices, but makes no effort to learn from rabbis. Such a person lacks one vital element in his comprehensive Torah-learning - the personally-transmitted Tradition which can be obtained only by direct interaction with a teacher. He gets reward for his practice only.

3. The one who goes to the Beis Medrash and puts his learning into practice. He is righteous.

4. The one who does not go to learn and does not improve his behavior. He is bad.

The Beis Medrash was chiefly where the Oral Teaching was communicated.

\textsuperscript{250} To learn.

\textsuperscript{251} He learned. Some say that he went, but did not learn because he did not understand.

\textsuperscript{252} Either he practices, but does not learn or he learns at home.
Those who sit before the wise men\textsuperscript{253} can be divided into four categories. The sponge, the funnel, the strainer\textsuperscript{254}, and the colander. The sponge absorbs everything\textsuperscript{255}. The funnel pours\textsuperscript{256} from one vessel into another. The strainer pours out the wine and collects the dregs, and the colander removes the flour-dust\textsuperscript{257} and collects the clean flour\textsuperscript{258}.

Four types of people sit before the wise men. They are compared to different vessels.

1. The sponge. This is one who absorbs everything, but may not be able to differentiate fact from fiction.
2. The funnel. This is one through whom the lesson just passes through. He understands little, and then only after repetitive lessons.
3. The cask drained of its wine, but which still retains the dregs. He neglects the essential parts of the lesson, but retains the unessential portions.
4. The colander. He captures the essential concepts, and lets pass the unimportant portions.

\textsuperscript{253} Regarding their ability to differentiate between the essence and correct parts from the non-essential and incorrect portions of a matter.

\textsuperscript{254} Filtering the dregs which remain, from the wine which flows forth. [Alter., the cask – RB].

\textsuperscript{255} The correct and the incorrect.

\textsuperscript{256} He does not take care to preserve the correct and the essential.

\textsuperscript{257} Fine, like dust.

\textsuperscript{258} The essential.
Any love which is dependent upon some external matter is liable to disappate once the external matter is no longer extant. However, love which is not dependent upon some external matter is permanent. What sort of love is dependent upon an external matter? That would be like the love between Amnon and Tamar. The type of love which is not dependent upon an external matter is like that that there was between David and Jonathan.

Any love which is dependent upon physical attraction or some external matter will vanish if that which it is dependent upon vanishes, such as that between Amnon and Tamar. He loved her simply for her beauty or because he lusted for her. Tanna D’vei Eliyoh says this is like the love between Balaam and Balak. Any love which is not dependent upon something transitory will never vanish, such as that between David and Jonathan. Their bond and mutual admiration was based on their equal desire and commitment to fulfill God’s Will. Tanna D’vei Eliyoh says this is like the love of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

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259 Done to derive pleasure from it.
260 Once his lust was satisfied, his attitude changed to hatred.
Any disagreement which is for the sake of Heaven shall, in the end, endure\(^{261}\), whereas any controversy not for the sake of Heaven shall, in the end, not endure. What is an example of a dispute for the sake of Heaven? The one between Hillel and Shammai. And what is one not for the sake of Heaven? That of Korah and his compatriots.

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261 The disputants search for the truth enhancing the honor of Heaven.
No sin shall be on the hands of those who do things for the benefit of the public, whereas anyone who leads the public to sin shall never be given the opportunity to successfully repent. Moses had merit and caused the masses to merit, therefore, we ascribe their merit to him, as it says (Deut. 33), “He did the righteousness of God, and righteous ordinances remained with Israel.” Jeroboam (son of Nevat) sinned and caused others to sin, so their sins are attributed to him, as it says (I Kings 15), “Regarding the sins of Jeroboam who sinned and caused Israel to sin.”

Anyone who acts for the benefit of the public will not come to sin. This is so that it should not come out that his “students” are in Heaven while he, the teacher, is in Gehinnom. Anyone who causes the public to sin will not even be given the opportunity to repent. Moses acted on behalf of the public by teaching them Torah and leading the multitude to righteousness, while Jeroboam ben Nevat sinned and caused others to sin. The sins of the public are attributed to him. The entire dynasty of Jeroboam perished by reason of the criminal seduction perpetrated by its ancestor.

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262 He will not sin and he will not cause others to sin.
263 And lead them in the proper way.
264 By Heaven, the opportunity to repent.
265 He taught the nation to perform matters of righteousness and justice.
266 His name is mentioned.
Anyone who exhibits any of these three traits is a pupil of Abraham, our forefather. But, if he has three other traits, it marks him as one of the disciples of the wicked Balaam. A good eye, a lowly spirit and subdued soul mark him as a student of Abraham, our forefather. An evil eye, a haughty spirit and an exaggerated soul make him a student of the wicked Balaam. What is the difference between the students of Abraham, our forefather, and those of the wicked Balaam? The students of Abraham, our forefather, eat in this world, and inherit the World to Come, as it says, (Proverbs 8), “I have what to bequeath those who love me, and their treasures I shall fill.” But the disciples of the wicked Balaam shall inherit Gehinnom, and shall descend a bottomless pit, as it says (Psalms 55). “You, God, shall lower them into a bottomless pit, those murderous people, and their lives shall be cut in half – but I shall trust in You.”

267 He is not jealous of the good others have.
268 Humility.
269 Modesty and satisfied with little.
270 Conceited.
271 Pursues pleasures.
The one who looks positively on things due to his love of God and people, has a humble spirit and does not pursue his desires but is satisfied with little, is counted as a disciple of Abraham. However, the one who casts an evil eye on others and views everyone as his competitor and enemy, acts haughtily, and is relentlessly pursuing his every desire or is a misanthrope, is a student of Balaam the wicked.
Yehuda ben Tema said, “Be as robust as a leopard, as fleet as an eagle, run like a dear, and be as strong as a lion when doing the will of your Father in Heaven.” He was wont to say, the arrogant go to Gehinnom, and the humble to the Garden of Eden. May it be the will of the Lord, our God, that His city be rebuilt very soon, in our days, and that He give us a portion in Your Torah.

Be as strong as a leopord - and not fear asking your teacher about something you don’t understand nor be self-conscious about observing the Torah and strong enough to resist attempts to lure you away from good and to induce you to do evil; and light as an eagle – racing to do God’s Will, and untiringly reviewing your learning over and over again, soaring up to God; run like a deer - in pursuit of performing the Commandments and away from sinning, knowing neither procrastination nor hesitation; and be as courageous as a lion and conquer your Inclination; mighty, to overcome all obstacles from within and without - all to do the Will of our Father in Heaven.

Conceited people, those who publicly defy God’s Commands, will go to Gehinnom, while the bashful, who are compassionate and do acts of loving-kindness, will go to Heaven.  ❧ Timidity leads to prudence, guarding a man from errors.  ❧ May it be Your will, God of our fathers and forefathers, to quickly build the Temple in our days and for You to give us a portion in Your Torah.  ❧ The Torah is the antidote for the Evil Inclination.

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272 Courageous.
273 Impudent.
274 Blushes easily.
275 Here ends the tractate. From here, are additions to the Mishnayos.
He was wont to say, “Five years of age” for Scripture, ten years old for Mishna, thirteen for the Commandments, fifteen for Talmud, eighteen for the marriage canopy, twenty for pursuing, thirty for strength, forty for understanding, fifty for counsel, sixty for sagacity, seventy for hoariness, eighty for courageousness, ninety for bending, and a hundred – well that’s like he’s dead, and useless, and has passed from this world.

The ideal ages to begin Torah education are as follows: At three or four a child should learn to read. At five, we begin to teach him Scriptures. At ten, Mishna. At thirteen, the Commandments. At fifteen, Talmud. The Gemara is that work which “completes” the Torah. When he turns eighteen, he should go find himself a wife. At twenty, he must begin pursuing a career or profession in order to support his wife and children. At this age, he becomes personally liable for his sins. He is also old enough to go out to war. At thirty, a man is at his peak strength. At forty, he begins to understand. At fifty, he has enough life-experience that he can now give intelligent counsel and advise. At sixty, he begins old age. At seventy, he has basically completed his life’s work and achievements. At eighty, he attains courageousness. His advice is sage. At ninety, he is bent over and his physical capabilities are diminished. He can now recount his life’s history. At one hundred, he has concluded his active life. He will no longer contribute to society. Every day he lives is a gift from God.

276 [Shmuel Hakoton- RB].
277 To begin to learn.
278 When he brings two hairs, and is called a man.
279 To be obligated to perform the Mitzvohs in the Torah.
280 To go earn a living for his wife and children. Some say to pursue the enemy, i.e. join the army.
281 He is at peak physical strength and can do hard work.
282 He can no longer do physical work.
Ben Bag Bag said, “Turn it over and over, for everything is contained within it, and you can view all matters through it. Become old and worn with it, for you have no better pursuit than her.”

Everything is in the Torah. Learn it repeatedly. And then, learn it again. You will learn from it even as an old man. Do not abandon it. Do not bother studying other philosophies, ideologies and theologies and so forth, as they are all a waste of your time. No wisdom in the world is superior to that of the Torah. The Torah is the one inexhaustible source of all the knowledge of what is good and true and worthwhile.

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283 The Torah.
Ben Hei Hei said, “The reward is commensurate with the effort.”

The more effort you exert in your learning and the more you sweat, the grander the reward. The measure of his earnest striving and devotion determine the true worth of both a man and his life.
Rebbe Meir said, “Anyone who engages in Torah for Heaven’s sake, merits many things. Not only that, but the entire world is only worthwhile because of him. He is called a companion, beloved, lover of God, lover of mankind, makes God glad, makes mankind joyous, it dresses him in humility and awe, it prepares him to be a righteous person, pious, honest, and trustworthy. It distances him from sinning, and brings him close to merit. Others benefit from his counsel, and sound wisdom, with understanding and courage, as it says, (Proverbs 8), “I have counsel and sound wisdom, I am understanding, and I have might”. It gives him majesty and rule, the ability to analyze the Law, and the secrets of the Torah are revealed to him. He becomes like an over-flowing spring and never-ending river. He shall be modest and perservering, forgiving of insults, exalted above all creation.

284 This chapter is an addendum to Mishna Avos and it is nearly completely like that found in Eliyahu Zuta, Chapter 17 and in Tractate Kalla Rabassi, Chapter 8.
285 Worthy of existing because of him.
286 Albeck reads this, A beloved friend. One who engages in Torah for the sake of Heaven is called a beloved friend.
287 Of God.
288 By performing the Mitzvos and good deeds.
Anyone who occupies himself with Torah for its own sake is called by many positive appellations. This is as if the whole world was created just for him. He is called a friend of God’s, beloved, lover of God, lover of Man, one who makes God happy, and makes people happy. He is clothed in modesty and awe. He is righteous in his thoughts and deeds. He is honest, trustworthy, distant from sinning, and meritorious. He is wise, intelligent and his counsel is bold. Such a person will be rewarded with majesty and governance. He will be able to judge. The mysteries of the Torah will be revealed to him. He will become like an ever-flowing spring and a vigorous river. He will be humble, compassionate and forgiving. This will make him great and exalted over all other people. Torah is to be studied with a pure purpose. Still, the upright man is preferred over the righteous one.
Rebbe Yehoshua ben Levi said, “Every single day a Heavenly Voice goes out from Mount Horeb declaring ‘Oy to those who insult the Torah. For all those who do not engage themselves in Torah are called 'reprimanded', as it says (ibid. 11), “A beautiful, but tasteless, woman who is like a ring in the nose of a pig”. And, (Exodus 32), “The Tablets are a work of God, and the script engraved (Charus) upon them is the script of God.” Do not read Charus (engraved) on the Tablets, but Cheirus (freedom)289 in order to teach you that there is no one freer than he who involves himself in learning Torah. Anyone who engages in learning Torah becomes exalted, as it says, (Numbers 21), “And from Mattana to Nachaliel290 and from Nachaliel to Bomos.”

A Heavenly voice is heard every day saying: How ugly it is that a Jew fails to learn Torah! What a waste! It is like a woman who was given natural beauty, but lacks moral sense or grace. ◆ The Torah frees Man from the temptations of physical lusts and desires. ◆ The man of Torah controls his inclinations and he is now free to be virtuous without being enticed by his desires. ◆ The angry man forgets his Torah.

289 The freedom of Israel is dependent upon the Tablets.
290 Israel is called His Nachalah - inheritance.
Anyone who learns even one chapter or one Halacha or one verse or one saying or even one letter from his fellow, must bestow upon him honor, since we found that David, King of Israel, learned but two things from Achitophel\(^{291}\), and yet called him ‘my master, my commander, my confidant’, as it says, (Psalms 55), “You are a man equal to me; you are my commander, my confidant’. This is a matter of inference. What David, King of Israel, who learned but two things from Achitophel and still called him my master, my commander, my confidant, how much more so anyone\(^{292}\) who learns even one chapter, one Halacha, one verse, one saying or one letter must honor the one who taught him this. And there is no honor but for Torah\(^{293}\), as it says (Proverbs 3), “The wise\(^{294}\) shall inherit honor” and (ibid. 28), “The perfected ones shall inherit good”. There is nothing truly good but Torah, as it says, “I have given them a good portion, my Torah; do not abandon it.”

\(^{291}\) David wanted the Levites to transport the Ark via wagon (II Samuel 6:3-8), but Achitophel said that they should carry the Ark on their shoulders as Moses had instructed (Numbers 7:9), and 2) Achitophel taught David that it was permitted to write the Name of God on earthenware in order to silence the nether-waters (Succah 53b). Tractate Kallah Rabbasssi says that he taught him two different things: 1) that one should not learn Torah alone, but with a friend, and 2) one should go to synagogue with enthusiasm and not contritely.

\(^{292}\) A commoner surely must call his teacher ‘rabbi’.

\(^{293}\) No one is worthy of honor except for the Torah he has learned.

\(^{294}\) The wise in Torah.
Once a person learns any matter of Torah from someone else, even as simple as how to read one letter correctly, he must give reverence to that person. He becomes his mentor and master. This is all the more true if he learns a wise saying or a Scriptural verse or a Torah Law or a chapter. ◇ Real honor is reserved for Torah scholars. ◇ The true good is Torah. ◇ The Torah holds our true human dignity and our true salvation.
So is the way of Torah\(^{295}\): You shall eat bread with salt, and drink water in measured amounts. You shall sleep on the ground, and you shall suffer a life of hardship, and in Torah you shall toil. If you do so, (Psalms 128), “Happy shall you be, and good will it be for you.” Happy in this world and good for you in the World to Come.

In order to truly gain from Torah study, one must set aside worldly pleasures, such as good food and a comfortable bed, and greatly exert himself in Torah-learning. Content will such a person be in this world, and good he will have in the World to Come.

\(^{295}\) The way to acquire the knowledge of Torah.
Neither pursue governing over other people nor honor. More than your learning, is your doing. Do not envy the noblemen’s tables, for your table is greater than theirs and your crown is greater than their crowns. Your Employer is trustworthy and shall pay you appropriately for your work.

296 Your deeds should exceed your learning.
The Torah is greater than the priesthood and the kingship, for kingship is acquired in thirty ways, the priesthood in twenty-four, but the Torah in forty-eight ways, which are: studying, attentiveness, ordered speech, understanding, awe, fear, humility, joy, purity, serving the wise, punctiliousness of colleagues, incisive talk with students, knowledge of Scripture and Mishna, minimizing involvement with commercial activity and secular affairs, minimizing pleasures in sleep, in conversation, and in levity, restraint, good-heartedness, trust in the Sages, acceptance of affliction, knowing one’s place, being content with one’s portion, creating a fence around one’s words, not feeling that you are due.

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297 It has thirty grades.
298 Priestly gifts.
299 To one’s rabbi; this the Oral Law.
300 Organizing one’s learning and repeating it clearly.
301 Learning intelligently.
302 Of God. Awe and fear are the same.
303 And learning from their actions.
304 Alternatively, in the Torah.
305 Engaging in sharp exchanges of give and take with students.
306 Of thought/opinion. Some say it is sitting.
307 Reading Scriptures and learning Mishna.
308 Affairs of the world.
309 Believing in their words.
310 Not complaining to God about your condition.
311 One must know his value and place, and not force himself into a place he is not worthy of.
312 Careful, unambiguous speech.
PIRKEI AVOS - SYNTHESIZED

good\textsuperscript{313}, beloved\textsuperscript{314}, loves God, loves mankind, loves righteousness\textsuperscript{315}, loves integrity\textsuperscript{316}, loves reproof, distances himself from honor, does not belittle his learning\textsuperscript{317} (alt. is not conceited because of his learning - Hirsch), takes no joy in ordering others around, shares the burden of his fellow men, prods his fellow towards innocence\textsuperscript{318}, draws him to the truth, draws him to peace, comes to terms with his learning (engages in mature reflection when studying – Hirsch), asks and responds, listens and adds\textsuperscript{319}, learns in order to teach, learns in order to do, make his master wise\textsuperscript{320}, orders his lessons\textsuperscript{321} (retains accurately what has been handed down to him by transmission – Hirsch), attributes what he quotes to the one from whom he heard it. For everyone who identifies his sources brings redemption to the world, as it says (Esther 2), “Esther spoke to the king in the name of Mordechai”\textsuperscript{322}.

Torah is greater than the priesthood and kingship. Kingship is acquired in thirty ways, the priesthood in twenty-four, but the Torah in forty-eight. These are the moral and spiritual virtues which he who strives after the crown of the Torah must acquire and employ through diligent labor upon his own personality before he can attain the goal of Torah.

The thirty ways which kingship is acquired are by his:

1. Ruling over others.
2. Recruiting male soldiers.
3. Commanding the army.
4. Controlling military resources.
5. Setting military doctrine and being the chief military strategist.
6. Commanding the high officers.
7. Commanding the low-rank officers.
8. Controlling the nation’s real-estate.

\textsuperscript{313} Because of the Torah you learned or your good deeds.
\textsuperscript{314} By people.
\textsuperscript{315} Loves doing acts of righteousness.
\textsuperscript{316} Honesty, straightforwardness.
\textsuperscript{317} Does not equate the value of his (Torah) learning with secular learning.
\textsuperscript{318} He encourages his friend to do the right things.
\textsuperscript{319} To his learning.
\textsuperscript{320} By asking intelligent questions.
\textsuperscript{321} Is precise in the Laws he heard and orders them one with another.
\textsuperscript{322} And redemption then came to Israel.
9. Controlling the nation’s harvest and GNP, i.e. the economy.
10. Controlling the weapons industry.
11. Controlling the military vehicle industry.
12. Enlisting the females.
13. Making the girls into pharmacists or perfumers.
14. Making them into cooks.
15. Making them into bakers.
16. Seizing private fields.
17. Seizing vineyards.
18. Seizing olives.
19. Giving them to his servants.
20. Taking private fields.
21. Taking vineyards, which he will tithe for his-
22. Courtesans, and
23. Servants.
24. Taking people’s male-servants.
25. Taking their maidservants.
26. Taking the best of their youth.
27. Taking their teachers; all of which he will-
28. Use for his own needs.
29. He will tithe the people’s flocks.
30. The populace will be his slaves.

Correspondingly, the king has thirty privileges:

1. The king does not judge, and
2. We don’t judge him.
3. He does not give testimony, and
4. We can’t give testimony about him.
5. He does not do Chalitza, and
6. His wife does not have Chalitza done with her.
7. He does not perform Levirite marriage, and
8. His wife does not have Levirite marriage done with her.
9. No one can marry his widow.
10. He does not exit his palace for the funeral of a relative.
11. The people sit on the ground when consoling him, and he sits on an ottoman.
12. He sends soldiers out to a discretionary war.
13. He can confiscate land for his own needs such as building roads, which
14. He can build as wide as he likes.
15. He receives all the booty from the people, and
16. He takes his portion first.
17. He may have up to eighteen wives, and
18. He may accumulate only as much money as he needs for supplies and provisions.
19. He may accumulate as many horses as he needs for his chariots.
20. A Sefer Torah is written for him, which
21. He carries with him to war, and
22. When he comes back from war or
23. When he is sitting in judgment or
24. When he is eating.
25. No one may ride his horse.
26. No one may sit on his chair.
27. No one may use his scepter.
28. No one may see him when he is naked.
29. No one may see him while he is having his hair cut.
30. No one may see him while he is in the bathhouse.

The Kohanim acquire their priesthood by receiving twenty-four gifts: ten in the Sanctuary and fourteen outside the Sanctuary.

The ten in the Sanctuary comprise:

1. The animal sin-offering.
2. The bird sin-offering.
3. Certain guilt-offerings.
4. Doubtful guilt-offerings.
5. Public peace-offerings.
6. The leper’s oil.
7. Remnants of the Omer.
8. The two loaves.
9. The showbread.
10. Remnants of the meal-offering.

The second group outside the Sanctuary comprises four in Jerusalem which are:

1. The first-born and first-fruits.
2. Portions of the Thanksgiving-offering.
3. Portions of the Nazirite’s offering.
This second group also comprises ten outside of Jerusalem which are:

1. The priest’s due.
2. The priest’s due from the Levite.
3. The Challah.
4. The first shearing.
5. The foreleg, jaw and stomach.
6. The first-born son.
7. The first-born donkey.
8. The homestead field.
9. The “Sdei Cherem” or “Sdei Achuza” (see Erchin Chapters 7 and 8).
10. Returned property stolen from a now-deceased convert who has no heirs.

The Gra has a slightly different list. He says that corresponding to these the Kohen Godol has twenty-four privileges (see Biurei HaGra).

The Torah is acquired in forty-eight ways:

1. By paying close attention and listening carefully to one's rabbi; and by learning from everyone. 😊 Even though the Oral Tradition has been put down in writing, it still cannot be passed on properly without also being taught by the written word.
2. By repeating many times the lesson to himself verbally, until he grasps the learning. 😊 Proper accurate and logical enunciation and verbalization serves not only as a test of the thought, but also as a means for impressing and retaining in the mind the subject matter.
3. By deep contemplation.
4. By developing awe of Heaven and of his rabbi.
5. By having fear of Heaven. 😊 The student must become aware of the sacred nature and Divine source of the subject. He must not come to violate the dignity of the sacred subject and its bearers.
6. By being humble. 😊 Modesty is the loftiest of virtues which faithfully guards and protects against any misstep or error on the path to wisdom and practical observance.
7. By being joyous, and having purity of heart and intention. 😊 There is no greater means for spiritual progress and elevation than that serenity and joy of the spirit which will cause a man to rejoice in life with all its tasks and burdens.
8. By serving Torah scholars, which is greater than studying with them.
9. By adhering to those committed to Torah. Isolation is incompatible with Jewish knowledge. It is only by association with living sages, close communion with associates and teaching disciples, that knowledge of Torah can be nurtured and promoted.
10. By engaging in profound discourse with other students. Calm and prudent learning is the mother of true and thorough knowledge.
11. By establishing set times for learning Torah and Mishna, which are the foundations for all Torah study.
12. By minimizing his business activities. The Torah seeks to teach us to view and arrange all human affairs on earth in the light of the Teaching of God. Active participation in civic and communal endeavors is a duty, but moderation is essential for there to be the time, mental clarity and emotional calm necessary for the cultivation of Torah wisdom.
13. By minimizing involvement in mundane affairs.
14. By minimizing pleasure.
15. By minimizing sleep.
16. By minimizing idle talk.
17. By minimizing humor.
18. By not angering.
19. By being kindhearted. The search for knowledge is obscured by jealousy and hatred. Because of his envy, he cannot acknowledge facts of truth and right discovered and uttered by others.
20. By trusting the authenticity of the rabbinic tradition. This means believing that everything our Sages and rabbis have said came directly from Heaven via Moses.
22. By accepting one’s limitations and restricted capacity to learn.
23. By accepting one’s lot in life, and not pursue riches. This also means that everyone must recognize that his real place is in the World to Come. God evaluates our achievements solely in terms of the extent to which we have made good use of the faculties with which He has endowed us.
24. By safeguarding one’s tongue from leading him to sin. Do not force your views on others; restrain yourself from
voicing your convictions unless outspokenness is fitting and proper; and qualify all your utterances with the reservation that they are true only to the best of your knowledge.

25. By not using one’s achievements in learning for his own benefit nor take credit for his Torah accomplishments. All our attainments are due to Divine Providence and with God’s help. Knowing this, we must view our achievements with no other emotion but humility.

26. By being loved.
27. By loving God.
28. By loving people, which will result in his being able to bring them close to Torah.
29. By doing righteousness.
30. By loving honesty and integrity. A true disciple of Torah study loves right, duty and fairness and will defend them wherever he may go.
31. By loving rebuke. For we should understand that reproach makes us better people.
32. By distancing oneself from honor and public recognition.
33. By taking no pride in your accomplishments in learning.
34. By having no enjoyment in ruling over others.
35. By carrying your weight in communal needs.
36. By judging everyone favorably.
37. By inspiring honesty and decency in others.
38. By inspiring others to pursue peace.
39. By learning with a reasoned mind. One should be levelheaded.
40. By not being afraid to ask when you do not know the answer.
41. By responding to inquiries when you do know the answer.
42. By being attentive.
43. By responding wisely and adding pertinent insights.
44. By learning in order to teach others.
45. By learning in order to do.
46. By sharpening his teacher with good questions.
47. By having a desire to learn.
48. By quoting his sources; otherwise it is like plagiarism. It is this quality which brings redemption to this world.
Great is the Torah as it gives life, both in this world and the World to Come, to those who put it into practice, as it says (Proverbs 4), “Life is for those who find it, and it heals all flesh”, and (ibid. 3), “It shall be healing for your body, and marrow for your bones”, and (ibid.), “It is a tree of life for those who grasp hold of it; those who support it shall be content”, and (ibid. 1), “It is a graceful garland upon your head, and necklaces around your throat”, and (ibid. 4), “It shall give your head a graceful garland, and a crown of glory”, and (ibid. 9), “With Me, your days shall increase, and years shall be added to your life”, and (ibid. 3), “Longevity is in its right hand and richness and honor in its left”, and (ibid.) “For many days and years of life and peace shall be added to you”, and (ibid.), “Its ways are pleasant, and its paths are peace.”

PIRKEI AVOS - SYNTHESIZED

SEVEN

Torah is great. It gives life to those who observe it in this world, and life in the World to Come. The Torah’s mandates enable every aspect of Man’s nature to achieve that growth and activation which is his destiny.

323 [This last verse is absent in some editions – RB].

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Rebbe Shimon ben Yehuda in the name of Rebbe Shimon ben Yochai said, “Adornments, power, wealth, honor, wisdom, old age, hoariness and children are pleasing for the righteous and pleasing for the world, as it says (ibid. 16), “A hoary head is a glorious crown; it is found in the way of righteousness”, and, (ibid. 20), “The ornament of young men is their strength, and the glory of the hoary-headed ones is old age”, and (ibid. 20), “The crown of the elders is their riches”, and (ibid. 17), “Grandchildren are the crown of the old, and the glory of the children is their parents”, and (Isaiah 24), “The Moon shall be humiliated and the Sun ashamed when the Lord of Hosts reigns on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and there shall be honor for His elders”. Rebbe Shimon ben Menasya said, “These are the seven characteristics which the Sages counted for the righteous, and all were present in Rebbe and his sons.

Energy, wealth, honor, wisdom, advanced age, seniority, and children are pleasant for the righteous and for the world. Rabbi Shimon ben Menasya said that Rabbi Yehuda Hanassi and his children had all seven of these blessings. Honest, decent grandchildren are the rewarding climax of their grandparents’ lives.
Rebbe Yosse ben Kisma said, “I was once walking on the way when I came across a person who greeted me with ‘Shalom’, and so I returned with ‘Shalom’. He then asked, ‘Rebbe. From where do you come?’ I told him that I come from a large city filled with wise men and scholars. He then asked, ‘Rebbe. Were you to live among us, in our place, I would give you a million gold pieces, expensive gems and jewels.’ I responded to him thus, ‘Even if you were to give me all the silver and gold and precious gems and jewels in the entire world, I would not live in any place except one of Torah, as it says in the David, King of Israel’s Book of Psalms, “The Torah from Your mouth is better than thousands in gold and silver.” And not only that, but when a person dies, nothing accompanies him further, not silver, not gold, not precious stones and jewels, only Torah and good deeds, as it says (Proverbs 6), “When you walk, it shall lead you; when you lie down it shall watch over you and when you awaken it shall address you”. “When you lie down” - in this world; “when you lie down, it shall watch over you” - in the grave; “when you get up, it shall address you” - in the World to Come, and (Chaggai 2), “All silver is mine, all gold is mine, so says the God of hosts.”"
Once on a journey he met someone who offered him much gold and jewels to move to his town, for Rabbi Yosse ben Kisma was a scholar and the man’s town lacked a scholar. Rabbi Yosse ben Kisma refused saying that all the gold and jewels in the world would never get him to live in a city without Torah. Not only that but, he said, it isn’t one's gold and jewels which accompany him after he dies. Rather it is his Torah and good deeds.
Five\textsuperscript{324} possessions did the Holy One, blessed be He, acquire for Himself in His world: the Torah is one, the Heavens and Earth are one, Abraham is one, Israel is one, and the Temple is one. Torah we learn from the verse (Proverbs 8), “\textit{God made me, the Torah, at the beginning of His enterprise as the blueprint for the universe, even before engaging in all His other activities of antiquity}”. Heaven and Earth, we learn from the verses (Isaiah 66), “\textit{So says God, The Heaven is my throne, the Earth is my footstool. What sort of house can you possibly build for Me, and what sort of place for Me to rest?}”, and (Psalms 104), “\textit{How grand are Your works, O God, all You have done was with wisdom; Your possessions fill the Earth}”. Regarding Abraham, we learn from the verse (Genesis 14), “\textit{Blessed be Avram to the Most High God, Possessor of Heaven and Earth}”. Israel we learn from the verses (Exodus 15), “\textit{Until Your people pass over, O God, until these people who You have acquired pass over}”, and (Psalms 16), “\textit{The holy ones who are on Earth, are distinguished by merit of the fact that they do all My will}”. The Temple we learn from the verses (Exodus 15), “\textit{The foundation of Your dwelling-place, the

\textsuperscript{324} Five special, beloved possessions.
sanctuary of the Lord, that You, God, prepared with Your own Hands”, and (Psalms 78), “He brought them to the border of His sacred boundary, which His right hand acquired”.

God has five exclusive possessions in this world:

1. Torah.
2. The heavens and earth.
3. Abraham.
4. Israel.
5. The Temple.

When God apportioned the regions of the earth among men, He retained for Himself, for a special purpose, one land, Eretz Yisroel, the Land of the Jews, which was to serve as the soil for His Law and of His people, who were to live (there) for the fulfillment of His Law.
All which the Holy One, blessed be He, created in His world he did only for His own glory, as it says (Isaiah 45), “Everything is called by My Name and I have created, fashioned and even made it all for My glory”, and (Exodus 15), “God shall reign for all eternity”.

God created all of existence solely for His own glory.
Rabbi Chanania ben Akashya said: The Holy One Blessed be He wanted to merit Israel, so He gave them much Torah and many Mitzvahs as it says, "God desires, for sake of His righteousness, to magnify Torah and make it exalted".

By learning Torah and observing the Mitzvahs they will acquire the World to Come.