Jewish Ethics
The Life-Elevating Wisdom of Pirkei Avot

introduction

Chasid

One who wishes to become a chasid should study Ethics of the Fathers.

*(Talmud, Bava Kama 30a)*

Law vs. Ethic

Law: One may not slander, insult or curse one’s fellow (Leviticus 19:14, 17)
Ethic: Receive every man with a pleasant countenance (Ethics 1:15)

Law: Lend material support to the needy (Leviticus 25:35)
Ethic: Let the poor be members of your household (Ethics 1:5)

Law: One may give tzedakah for the merit of healing (Talmud, Pesachim 8a)
Ethic: Do not be as slaves who serve... for the sake of reward (Ethics 1:3)

Avot

“Lifnim mishurat hadin”

*hol yisrael*

Unbreakable

A Jew, although he has transgressed, is a Jew.

*(Talmud, Sanhedrin 44a)*

1:1

So You Want to Be a Torah Scholar?

1. Humility
2. Devotion
3. Investment
4. Awe
5. Application
Perpetuating Torah

1. Patience
2. Love
3. Integrity

**timeline**

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Cardinal Sins

Adultery
Idolatry
Murder

1:3

Motive

Always occupy yourself with Torah and mitzvot even not for its sake, since as a result of [fulfillment] not for its sake you will attain [fulfillment] for its sake.

*(Talmud, Sotah 47a)*

1:4

Accountability

A full cup cannot receive.

*(Talmud, Berachot 40a)*
1:5

Love
A man must certainly love his wife as if she were his own flesh.
(Talmud, Yevamot 62b)

1:6

Lost Cause?
One who sins and causes others to sin is not given a chance to repent.
(Talmud, Sanhedrin 107b)
Yet if he persists, his repentance is accepted.
(Tanya, ch. 25)

No Judgment
Do not judge your fellow until you are in his place.
(Ethics 2:4)

Greater Strength, Greater Challenge
Whoever is greater than his fellow, his inclination (for evil) is also greater.
(Talmud, Sukkah 52a)

1:9

Witnesses
You have seen all that G-d did before you in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and his servants, and to all his land...
(Deuteronomy 29:1)

1:12

Unconditional Love
Love your fellow as yourself.
(Leviticus 19:18)
Love for a fellow means to love the completely wicked as one loves the completely righteous.
(Maggid of Mezritch)
1:14

Grab a Mitzvah

Our world is a banquet—grab and eat, grab and drink.

(Talmud, Eruvin 54a)