

Jewish Ethics

The Life-Elevating Wisdom of Pirkei Avot

In loving memory of Yehuda ben Ita Esther A"H

5:1

Sequence

- 1) Creation
- 2) First 10 generations
- 3) Second 10 generations
- 4) Abraham
- 5) Egyptian exile
- 6) Exodus
- 7) Splitting of the sea
- 8) Desert journey
- 9) Holy Temple in Jerusalem

Creative Speech

Forever, O G-d, Your word stands firmly in the heavens.

(Psalms 119:89)

Punishment First?

G-d is the essence of good, and the nature of good is to bestow goodness.

(Rabbi Isaac Luria)

5:2

Tzadik in Fur Coat

For this to me is like the waters of Noah: As I swore that the waters of Noah nevermore would flood the earth, so I swear that I will not be angry with you or rebuke you.

(Isaiah 54:9)

5:3

True Sacrifice

Why did G-d, in commanding Abraham to bind his son, say "I beseech you..."
(Genesis 22:2)?

Intown Jewish Academy ♦ 928 Ponce de Leon Ave ♦ Atlanta, GA 30306
www.IntownJewishAcademy.org ♦ (404) 898-0434 ♦ rabbiari@chabadintown.org

G-d said to Abraham: “I have tried you with many tests and you have withstood them all. Now, I beg you, please withstand this test for Me, lest they say that the earlier ones were of no substance.

(Talmud, Sanhedrin 89b)

5:4

Show Me a Sign!

We do not see our signs; there is no longer a prophet, and there is none among us who knows how long.

(Psalms 74:9)

5:5

Raging Waters

Many waters cannot extinguish the love, nor can rivers wash it away.

(Song of Songs 8:7)

5:6

Tools of the Trade

The silversmith uses tongs to hold hot metal and form it into tools and vessels.

(Talmud, Pesachim 54a)

5:7

Wisdom of Experience

An elder (*zakein*) is one who has acquired wisdom (*zeh shekana chachmah*).

(Talmud, Kiddushin 32b)

5:8

Judicial Agony

A judge who tarries with matters that are obvious, in order to torture one of the litigants—this is included in the Biblical prohibition against “committing an injustice during a trial” (Leviticus 19:15).

(Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Sanhedrin 20:6)

5:10

Giving Freely

You shall not take from him interest or increase, and you shall fear your G-d.
(*Leviticus 25:36*)

All Mine!

And Laban answered and said to Jacob, "The daughters are my daughters, and the sons are my sons, and the animals are my animals, and all that you see is mine."
(*Genesis 31:43*)

Beyond the Letter

Some porters broke a barrel of wine they were carrying for Rabbah bar Bar Channah. He took their garments. They came and reported this to Rav.

Rav said to him: "Give them their garments."

He asked: "Is that the law?"

Rav replied: "Yes, in accordance with, 'So that you will go in the ways of the good' (Proverbs 2:20)."

He gave them their garments.

The workers said to him: "We are poor, and we have worked the entire day. We're exhausted, and we have nothing to show for it."

Rav said to him: "Go, give them their wages."

He said to him: "Is that the law?"

He replied: "Yes, in accordance with, 'And you will keep to the paths of the righteous' (ibid.)."

(*Talmud, Bava Metzia 83a*)

5:11

Anger Management

One who gets angry is as if they have served idols.

(*Talmud, Shabbat 105b; Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Hilchot De'ot 2:3*)

5:12***Listen Closely***

A Heavenly voice proclaims, "Return, wayward children" (Jeremiah 3:22).

(Talmud, Chagigah 15a)

5:13***Fostering Independence***

There are eight levels of charity, each greater than the next.

The greatest level, above which there is no greater, is to support a fellow Jew by endowing him with a gift or loan, or entering into a partnership with him, or finding employment for him, in order to strengthen his hand until he need no longer be dependent upon others...

(Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Tzedakah 10:7)

You Go First

Rabbi Natan said: What prompted the leaders to donate first for the dedication of the Altar, and not for the construction of the Tabernacle? They said, "Let the community donate what they will donate, and whatever they are missing we will complete"... Because they were initially idle a letter "yud" is missing from their name.

(Rashi on Exodus 35:27)

5:14***Giving Back***

May He bless... those who establish synagogues for prayer, and those who come there to pray, those who provide lights for illumination, wine for Kiddush and havdalah, food for the wayfarers and charity for the needy, and all who occupy themselves faithfully with communal affairs...

(Shabbat Morning Liturgy)

5:16***True Love***

Jacob worked for Rachel seven years, but to him it felt like a few days because of his love for her.

(Genesis 29:20)

Violating Love

Afterwards Amnon despised her with a great hatred; his hatred was even greater than his love that he had felt for her.

(II Samuel 13:15)

5:17***Truth***

Both these and these are the words of the Living G-d.

(Talmud, Eruvin 13b)

5:20***Being Bold***

When Rabbi Naftali of Ropshitz was a child and attempted to rise early in the morning to serve G-d, his evil inclination would tell him, "Why do you need to get up so early? It's still dark outside!"

The young Naftali would respond boldly: "You have already risen to do your job—but you're telling me not to rise for my job?"

(Cited in Likutei Batar Likutei)

5:21***Dig Deeper***

There are 70 'faces' to the Torah.

(Midrash, Bamidbar Rabbah 13:15)

5:22***Time to Fight***

Count the heads of the congregation of the children of Israel... from the age of twenty and upward, all who are fit to serve in the army of Israel, you shall count them.

(Numbers 1:2-3)

Time to Serve

[The Levite] is withdrawn from those qualified to work from the age of fifty... He shall assist his brethren... but he may not perform service.

(Numbers 8:25-26)

Intown Jewish Academy ♦ 928 Ponce de Leon Ave ♦ Atlanta, GA 30306
www.IntownJewishAcademy.org ♦ (404) 898-0434 ♦ rabbiari@chabadintown.org



Intown Jewish Academy ♦ 928 Ponce de Leon Ave ♦ Atlanta, GA 30306
www.IntownJewishAcademy.org ♦ (404) 898-0434 ♦ rabiari@chabadintown.org