

# Jewish Ethics

## The Life-Elevating Wisdom of Pirkei Avot

### 2:1

#### *Divine Design*

An architect who builds a palace does not do so on his own. He has scrolls and notebooks which he consults on how to place the rooms, where to set the doors. So it was with G-d: He looked into the Torah and created the world.

*(Midrash Rabbah, Bereishit 1:2)*

#### *Doing & Feeling*

All that G-d has spoken we will do and we will comprehend.

*(Exodus 24:7)*

#### *The ‘Little’ Things*

Praise the L-rd... Who gives food to all flesh, for His kindness is everlasting.

*(Psalms 136:25)*

### 2:4

#### *Community*

צ = צדיקים

ב = בינונים

ר = רשעים

#### *The Mirror*

Your fellow is your mirror. If your own face is clean, the image you will perceive will also be flawless. But should you look upon your fellow and see a blemish, it is your own imperfection you are encountering—you are being shown what it is that you must correct within yourself.

*(Baal Shem Tov)*

### ***Self-Love***

Love covers all sins.  
*(Proverbs 10:12)*

### ***Shhhhh!***

The walls have ears.  
*(Yalkut Shimoni, Kohelet 10)*

## **2:5**

### ***Impediments***

[Torah] is not in the sky... nor across the sea... but very close to you.  
*(Deuteronomy 30:12-13)*

## **2:7**

### ***Worry***

Sweet is the sleep of the laborer, whether he eats little or much; but the satiety of the rich man deprives him of sleep.  
*(Ecclesiastes 5:11)*

### ***Charity & Peace***

Rabbi Yehuda ben Shimon said: This poor man is sitting and protesting [to G-d]: “Why am I worse than the next fellow? He is sleeping on his bed and I am sleeping here on the floor. He is sleeping in his house and I am sleeping here on the road.” If you then go and assist the pauper, G-d says: “I swear that I will consider it as if you have made peace between he and I.”  
*(Midrash Rabbah, Vayikra 34:16)*

## **2:10**

### ***Wise***

The wise man has eyes in his head; but the fool walks in darkness.  
*(Ecclesiastes 2:14)*

The wise man looks into the beginning (“head”) of the deed to see its end.  
*(Rashi on verse)*

***Life to its Fullest***

Rabbi Eliezer’s students asked: Does a person know the day of his death?

He replied: All the more so! Let him return today lest he die the day after. All his days will then be spent in return.

*(Avot d’Rabbi Natan)*

**2:12*****Three Relationships to Torah***

**Inheritance:** Moses commanded us the Torah, which is an inheritance to the congregation of Jacob.

*(Deuteronomy 33:4)*

**Purchase:** I sold you my Torah...

*(Midrash Rabbah, Shemot 33:1)*

**Gift:** G-d gave three gifts to the Jewish people: the Torah...

*(Talmud, Berachot 5a)*

***A Good Find***

If someone tells you, “I toiled but did not find [success]”—do not believe him.

“I did not toil but I found”—do not believe him.

“I toiled and found”—believe him.

*(Talmud, Megillah 6b)*

***Effort***

Many rivers have gone dry; many rocks have given water...

*(Meiri on Talmud ibid.)*

**2:16*****Be Yourself***

When I come before the heavenly court, they will not ask me why I was not Abraham, Isaac or Jacob; they will ask me why I was not Zusha.

*(Rabbi Zusha of Anipoli)*



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