

Cincinnati
March 11, 1963

Report on Rabbinical Thesis of Murray Jacob Berger
Entitled
"A Critical Translation of Obadiah of Bertinoro's Commentary
to Pirqa Aboth, Including Explanatory Notes"

Mr. Berger's undertaking in translating the commentary of Obadiah of Bertinoro on Pirqa Aboth into English was not an easy one. While the language of the commentary is not particularly difficult, its text contains intricacies often overlooked by the casual reader but cannot be ignored in a scholarly translation. Even more difficult than the translation is the identification of the numerous sources of Obadiah which are quite often not even marked as quotations. Mr. Berger worked painstakingly in his search for Obadiah's sources and was able to identify them, with some exceptions. His translations are, on the whole, adequate, although for publication a revision would be needed. His notes are brief and to the point.

The particular value of Mr. Berger's thesis lies in the fact that his is the first English translation of Obadiah's commentary on Aboth ever made, and it may serve as the spadework for subsequent translations. This fact enhances the value of his thesis which is a worthwhile contribution to the literature of translations of Rabbinical texts.

I take great pleasure in recommending the acceptance of Mr. Berger's thesis.

Alexander Guttmann
Referee

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A CRITICAL TRANSLATION OF OBADIAH OF
BERTINORO'S COMMENTARY TO PIRQE ABOTH, INCLUDING EXPLANATORY NOTES

by

MURRAY JACOB BERGER

Thesis submitted in partial
fulfillment of the requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts
in Hebrew Letters and Ordination

Hebrew Union College-
Jewish Institute of Religion
March 1963

Referee:
Dr. Alexander Guttman

FOR MY FIANCEE,
who is all my life

DIGEST

Pirke Aboth is the best known of the tractates of the Mishnah. It has been translated into many languages, and is available to any willing reader. What is sorely lacking, however, is the handmaiden to this classic, namely, the rabbinical exegesis and commentary upon its text. This is accessible only to those well-versed in Hebrew, for it has never been rendered into the vernacular; therefore, a translation is necessary.

Rabbi Obadiah of Bertinoro's commentary on Pirke Aboth has been accepted in Jewish circles as the classic work in this field. It is brief, topical, informative, yet directly to the point. It is the most important work on Pirke Aboth, but is not available in English; thus, I have chosen to translate it.

The Pirke Aboth contains six chapters, the last (probably) being an addendum. Rabbi Obadiah of Bertinoro has commented only on the original five chapters. The translation of and explanatory notes to Rabbi Obadiah of Bertinoro's commentary to these chapters of Pirke Aboth are contained within this thesis.

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PREFACE

Through the years countless books and articles have been written about Pirke Aboth by many scholars and men of religious learning. These are available in almost every language to any interested reader. What has been seriously lacking, however, is the availability of medieval and renaissance rabbinic exegesis upon the text of Pirke Aboth. Having been written in the "Holy Tongue," these various Hebrew commentaries have remained inaccessible to all but the very few who are familiar with the tongue. The author, being aware of this problem and feeling that the availability of such material in the vernacular is urgently needed, has therefore written this translation of Rabbi Obadiah of Bertinoro's commentary to the Pirke Aboth, since his is considered to be a classic work.

Of course, it would have been impossible to do this by myself. I must therefore thank both the Hebrew Union College Library and the Library of the Bureau of Jewish Education in Cleveland, Ohio, for their endless aid in providing me with the necessary texts and source materials. Special thanks are also due Mr. Joseph Guzik, Mr. Bernard Mehlman, and Mr. Alan Fuchs for their invaluable assistance in terms of alleviating many textual obscurities.

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I am indebted to Miss Susan Schwartz for her careful preparation of my manuscript, and to my beloved parents, who first introduced me to this world of knowledge. Moreover, I am particularly grateful to my beloved fiancée, Roberta Schwartz, who was my constant source of encouragement, my foremost critic, my proofreader par excellence, and without whom this thesis could never have been fully accomplished.

I would also like to thank Dr. Alexander Guttman, my referee, whose advice and encouragement cannot be told in mere words.

All translations are taken from the Jewish Publication Society translation of The Holy Scriptures - 1917, Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia. Talmudic quotes are from the standardized Hebrew versions, the translations of which being from The Babylonian Talmud, edited by Rabbi Dr. I. Epstein, London, The Sonchino Press - 1948. All material enclosed in parentheses which appears within the text are my own additions, and do not appear in the Hebrew.

March, 1963

M. J. B.

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INTRODUCTION

Obadiah (Yareh) Ben Abraham Bertinoro was born in Italy about 1450 C. E. and died in Jerusalem about 1510 C. E. He was a student of Joseph b. Solomon Colon and became rabbi in Bertinoro (a town in northern Italy from which he derived his name) and in Costello. In 1486 he was motivated to emigrate to Palestine, and began his journey on October 29. After traveling through Naples, Salerno, Palermo, Rhodes, and Alexandria, he arrived in Jerusalem on March 25, 1488. With his arrival a new era began for the Jewish community of Palestine, which was then in a miserable condition of ignorance and poverty, and subjected to uncalled-for persecution by the Mohammedan government.

He was elected chief rabbi of Palestinian Jewry, and through his assets of strong personality, eloquence, and scholarship, he immediately succeeded in raising the intellectual level of the community in subjects of Jewish concern. With money acquired through connections in Italy, he took on the responsibility of supporting the poor. He also negotiated with the government for better tax conditions for Palestinian Jews.

The expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492 resulted in their settling in Palestine in great numbers. Bertinoro became their leader, and established a Yeshiva and other benevolent institutions in Jerusalem.

As a result of Bertinoro's decade of leadership, during

which the condition of Palestinian Jewry greatly improved, his fame and reputation spread throughout the entire Orient. He was regarded as a rabbinical authority of the highest degree, whereby Mohammedans even came to him with legal cases. Bertinoro is most well-known and remembered for his commentary on the Mishnah. The importance of this work, and the manner of his achievement can best be summed up by the following synopsis.

"Bertinoro is usually known as the best commentator of the Mishnah; the importance of his commentary is illustrated by the fact that since its appearance (Venice, 1549) hardly an edition of the Mishnah has been printed without it; even Surenhuis in his Latin translation and commentary upon the Mishnah (Amsterdam, 1698-1703) translated Bertinoro. Its excellence lies in the fact that he selected the best afforded by Rashi and Maimonides and gave this in clear and easily comprehensible fashion; in the matter of originality, however, Bertinoro does not approach his distinguished predecessors, nor even his successor in the department, Yom-Tob Lipmann Heller."¹

"...He wrote his commentary of the Mishnah. It comprises the entire Mishnah covering every tractate, and is as complete as possible. It is written with a view of explaining the Mishnah to those who make a special study of it apart from the Gemarah. His method is exceptionally well-adapted for this purpose. He explains every word and expression which needs explanation, but his primary interest lies in clarifying the meaning of whole passages. His treatment is both detailed and inclusive, inasmuch as he interprets the Mishnah in accordance with the results arrived at in the discussions of the Gemarah. Bertinoro also supplies all necessary details regarding the subjects treated

in the various Mishnoth, even if these are not given in the Gemarah immediately adjoining these particular Mishnoth. He does not deviate from his main purpose, that of commenting upon the text, and therefore, his work contains no pillulistic or scholastic discussions. Hence, its great value. As a rule, he gives one interpretation to a passage, only on rare occasions offering two, quoting the second in the name of the author. Very few sources are given by our commentator except that of Maimonides' commentary on the Mishnah which is mentioned quite frequently... To all other qualities, we must also add that of style which is clear and concise and very seldom verbose. All these qualities made the work of Obadiah the standard commentary on the Mishnah which is printed in all editions."²

CHAPTER I

1:1

Moses received the Torah on Sinai:

I say, that since this tractate is not based on any of the precepts of the Torah like the other tractates of the Mishnah,¹ but rather all of it consists of ethical teachings and character-traits; and since the non-Jewish philosophers also composed books about ethical behavior which they arbitrarily invented in their own minds - (namely) how one should conduct himself toward his fellow man - therefore, the Tanna² began this tractate with, "Moses received the Torah on Sinai", in order to inform you that the sages of the Mishnah did not invent arbitrarily in their own minds the character traits and ethical teachings which are found in this tractate, but even these also were said on Sinai.

On Sinai

From Him who revealed Himself on Sinai.

To the elders

"...That outlived Joshua..."³ And these same elders transmitted it to other elders until they reached the beginning of the era of the prophets, who were Eli the Priest⁴ and Samuel of Rama.⁵

To the Men of the Great Assembly

There were one-hundred and twenty elders: Zerubbabel, Seraiah, Reaiaiah, Mordecai Bilshan,⁷ who lived in the days of Ezra when they returned from the Exile in the time of the Second Temple; and also included amongst them were Haggai,⁸ Zechariah,⁹ Malachi,¹⁰ Nehemiah, the son of Hacaliah,¹¹ and their colleagues. And they were called the

Great Assembly because "...they restored the crown of the divine attributes to its ancient completeness."¹² For Moses said, "...the great God, the mighty and the awful..."¹³ Jeremiah and Daniel came but did not say "...mighty and awful..."¹⁴ But they restored them (attributes) as they originally were¹⁵ for they said "Therein lie His mighty deeds and therein lie His awful powers,"¹⁶ for if this were not so, how could a people like this (Israel) be able to exist, confronted by so many nations?"¹⁷

They said three things:

They said many things, but they said these three things upon which the preservation of the Torah depends.

Be deliberate in judgment

If a case has come before you once or twice or three times before, do not say, "This case has already come before me and I have reviewed it two or three times previously"; rather, be deliberate - that is, wait before you render the decision.

Raise up many disciples

This is contrary to Rabbi Gamliel, who said, "No disciple whose inside is not as his outside may enter the Beth ha-Midrash."¹⁸ Thus, we learn that one should teach Torah to anyone and need not investigate him, providing that it is not manifestly known that his actions are corrupt and that his reputation is bad. Another meaning derived from this is, "If he had disciples in his youth, he should also have disciples in his old age. For it is said, 'In the morning¹⁹ sow thy seed and in the evening²⁰ withhold not thine hand'²¹."²²

And make a fence round the Torah

A fence so that one will not become tempted to violate biblical prohibitory laws; for example, rabbinical teachings about incest of second degree,²³ and Shebuth;²⁴ as it is written, "Therefore shall ye keep My charge..."²⁵ (which is interpreted as) "Provide a charge to my charge."²⁶

1:2

One of the last survivors

One of those who remained, for after all of them died, the tradition was left in his possession. And he was the High Priest after Ezra.²⁷

He used to say

That is, "He was in the habit of saying". And, likewise, every (occurrence of) "Rabbi so-and-so says" and "He used to say" which are in this tractate, have as their meaning, "He was in the habit of saying".

The world is based

For if Israel had not accepted the Torah, the heaven and earth would not have been created, for it is written: "...If My covenant be not with day and night, if I have not appointed ordinances of heaven and earth..."^{28,29}.

Upon Divine service

That is, the sacrificial service; for thus we learn in the tractate of Taanith, "Were it not for the Maamaduth,³⁰ the heaven and the earth would not have been established."³¹ And we find that, because of the sacrifices that Noah offered, the Holy One Blessed be He promised that he would not bring a flood upon the world.³² Thus, the world exists because of sacrifices.

And upon the practice of charity

As it is written " "...For ever is mercy built..."³³ Acts of charity are: to make newlyweds happy, to comfort the mourners, to visit the sick, to bury the dead, and acts similar to these.

1:3

A Reward

This is an expression of value (ערך). "(ערכך)" - valuation is translated into Aramaic³⁴ as מורטניה ;³⁵ that is, something which a man voluntarily gives to someone who works for him, but to whom he is not obligated by law to give anything; -- for example, something that a man gives to his younger son or to his wife or to his slave because of the satisfaction that they afforded him. A man should not serve his Creator even for the hope of such a reward, but (should be motivated) by love alone.

And let the fear of Heaven be upon you

Even though you serve out of love, also serve out of fear. For one who serves out of love is careful about the positive commandments and one who serves out of fear is careful about the prohibitions (as well), and so his service is complete. And thus our sages of blessed memory said, "Serve out of love and serve out of fear. You shall serve out of love, for should you come to hate, know that you love, and one who loves cannot hate. You should serve out of fear, for should you come to despise, know that you fear, and one who fears cannot despise."³⁶

1:4

Yose, the son of Yoezer, of Zeredah, and Yose, the son of Yochanan,
of Jerusalem

All the Tannaim that are listed in the chapter are in "pairs."³⁷

(Where it says) so-and-so and so-and-so received the tradition from so-and-so and so-and-so, the first mentioned (of each pair) is the Nasi,³⁸ and the latter mentioned is the Ab Beth Din.³⁹

Let thy house be a meeting house for the wise

Should the wise want to gather and meet, let your house be prepared for such a thing, so that they be accustomed to say, "Let us gather in so-and-so's house," for it is impossible that you not learn some wisdom from them. A parable is told: To what may this be compared? To one who entered a spice store. Even though he bought nothing, nevertheless, he retained the pleasant smell and carried it away with him.⁴⁰

Sit amidst the dust of their feet

That is to say that you should walk after them, for one who walks raises dust with his feet and one who follows him is covered with the dust that the former has raised with his feet.

Another explanation: that you should sit at their feet upon the ground. For thus they used to do, the teacher sat on a bench and the students sat at his feet on the ground.⁴¹

And drink in their words with thirst

Like a thirsty man who drinks until satisfaction, and not like a satiated man who has just finished his meal and despises even sweet and fine things.

1:5

Let thy house be open wide

Like the house of Abraham, may he rest in peace, which was open in

all four directions so that visitors need not search in order to find the door.⁴²

Let the poor be members of thy household

And one should not buy slaves to serve him. It is better that a Jew benefit from his property than an offspring of "the cursed Canaanite."⁴³

This applies even to one's own wife

Since he says "With נֶפֶשׁ ⁴⁴ and not "With נֶפֶשׁ ,⁴⁵ we learn that "this applies even to one's own wife." There are some who explain "Even to one's own wife" as (meaning) only when she is in the period of menstruation, so that one should not become accustomed to sin. But from the words of the Mishnah it appears (this applies) even if one's wife is pure.⁴⁶ And thus our rabbis of blessed memory said, "'And declareth unto man what is his thought...'⁴⁷ Even the light, superfluous conversation between a man and his wife is told to a person at the time of Judgment - except if he has to procure her favor for the precept, like Rav, who conversed and jested and performed his deeds."⁴⁸

Hence the sages say:

Rabbi Judah bar-Nasi,⁴⁹ who redacted the Mishnah, wrote that from the words of that sage who said, "And engage not in much gossip with women," the sages learned to say, "Whoso engages in much gossip with women brings evil upon himself."

I found it written that when a man tells his wife what has happened to him - "that such-and-such occurred to me with so-and-so" - she

acquires this (information) for the purpose of inciting an argument. This is like Korah who told his wife what Moses had done, that he had offered the Levites for a wave-offering,⁵⁰ and with these words she incited an argument with him.⁵¹ Or it may mean, since one tells her that his friends discredited and shamed him, so she too despises him in her heart, and this brings evil upon oneself.

Neglects the study of Torah

Since one is drawn toward vain things and does not busy oneself with Torah.

1:6

Provide thyself a teacher

Rambam⁵² explained that, even though one is not worthy to be your teacher, make him your teacher, but, confidentially, do not (really) learn (from him). But I heard, concerning "Provide thyself a teacher," that one should acquire one teacher for himself from whom he will always learn, and not learn from one teacher today and from another the next day.

And even though they said in Avodah Zarah, "Whoever learns Torah from one teacher only will never achieve great success," they had already explained and said, "the maxim only applies to lessons in logical deduction - that it is good for one to hear the logical deductions of many - but, as to oral traditions, it is better to learn from one master only, so that one is not confused by the variation in the terms used."⁵³

Get thee a companion

Even if you have to acquire him with much money and have to spend

money on him in order that you may acquire his love. However, with respect to a teacher, it is not appropriate to say "Get thee a teacher," since a teacher should teach for nothing.

And judge all men charitably

When something is in the balance of a scale and there is no leaning toward either side -- for example, someone from whose actions we cannot know whether he be righteous or evil and who has performed a deed for which it is possible to judge him innocent or guilty - it is the pious way to judge him innocent. But in the case of a man who constantly does evil, it is permitted to judge him guilty, for they only said, "He who entertains a suspicion against innocent men is bodily afflicted,"⁵⁴ which implies that whoever suspects an evil man is not bodily afflicted.

1:7

Keep thee far from a bad neighbor

So that you will not be influenced by his actions, and moreover, so that you will not be harmed with him in his fall - "For woe to the evil one and woe to his neighbor."⁵⁵

Associate not with the wicked

For thus said the sages, "Anyone who keeps company with evil men, even though he does not act as they do, receives the same payment as they do."⁵⁶ To what can this be compared? To one who entered a tannery; even though he did not purchase anything, nevertheless he retained a bad odor and carried it away with him.⁵⁷

And abandon not the belief in retribution

So that you not say, "This evil man's endeavors are successful, I

shall go and join him since the hour smiles on him." Therefore he said, "And abandon not the belief in retribution," that is, know that retribution will come upon him quickly "...Therefore his calamity shall come suddenly..."⁵⁸

1:8

(In the judge's office) act not the counsel's part

Like those men who prepare and arrange the pleas of litigents before the judges, because it is forbidden for a man to reveal his decision to one of the litigents and say to him, "Do thusly so that you will win your case," even though he knows that the judgment is in that man's favor.

Another explanation: "The counsel's part" means like the chief justice, and this refers to a student sitting before his teacher who is speaking, that he should not make himself like one of the chief justices by speaking prior to his teacher while he is rendering a decision.

"The counsel's part" is an expression of heathen courts,⁵⁹ "The heathen courts of the house of David."⁶⁰

And from others I heard, that you should not make yourself like the chief justices by forcing the litigents to come for judgment before you.

Let them both be regarded by thee as wicked

So your heart will not incline toward one of them saying, "So-and-so is important and would not present a false plea." For if you think thusly, then you will not find him guilty.

The verdict having been acquiesced in by them

So that you will not suspect the guilty party saying, "This man was a

robber." But you should say, "Perhaps he erred and did not intend to rob." Or it may mean, that if one of them was obligated to take an oath and did, do not say, "He swore falsely."

1:9

And be heedful of thy words

That the judge not say, "Perhaps such-and-such was the case" or, "If the episode occurred thusly, then so-and-so is innocent," the result of these words being that the litigant or the witnesses learn to say something that did not occur.

1:10

Shemayah and Avtalyon

They were proselytes and descendents of Sennacherib.⁶¹ And I heard that since Avtalyon was the Ab Beth Din,⁶² he was given this name which means "father of minors (i. e., orphans);"⁶³ in as much as

א'ל means 'small one' in Aramaic, i. e. as Rabbi Yochanan said, "When I was a boy"⁶⁴ and "Lead forth some boys and girls."⁶⁵ Here too, Avtalyon means "father of orphans (who are) minors."

Love work

Even though one has some other source of income, he is obligated to busy himself with work, "for idleness leads to idiocy."⁶⁶

Hate lordship

And do not say, "I am a great man and it is a discredit for me to work." For Rav said to Rav Kahanna, "Flay carcasses in the market place and earn wages and do not say 'I am a priest and a great man and it is beneath my dignity.'"⁶⁷

Another explanation of "Hate lordship:" Shun practicing power over

the community, for the mastery buries its possessors.

And seek no intimacy with the ruling power

In order to obtain rulership through it. Or "Seek no intimacy with the ruling power" may mean - so that it will not make you sin against your Maker as happened to Doeg the Ammonite.⁶⁸

The ruling power

The government is called "the ruling power (מְשֻׁלָּת)" because it has the power (מְשֻׁלָּת) to act according to its wish.

1:11

Be heedful of your words

So that you do not leave room for heretics to err with your words.

Lest ye incur the penalty of exile

That is, even though in your location there are no heretics to err, you should consider that sin might cause you to incur the penalty of exile. And you will be exiled to a place where there are people who misinterpret the Torah, who are surnamed "evil waters," and they will understand improper things from your words, and the students that come after you will drink words of heresy from these very words.

And die

For their sins.

And the Heavenly Name be profaned

For those vain thoughts will remain in the world, just as it happened to Antigonus of Soko with Zadok and with Boethus, his students, when he said to them, "Be not like servants who minister to their master upon the condition of receiving a reward." And they said, "Is it possible that a laborer work all day and labor and not receive a re-

ward at evening?" And they and their students left Judaism and are called Sadducees and Boesthusians to this day.⁶⁹

1:12

Be of the disciples of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing peace

They explained in the Fathers according to Rabbi Nathan,⁷⁰ how Aaron loved peace. When he saw two men quarreling, he would go to each of them individually without the other one knowing and say to him, "Look at your friend repenting and smiting himself because he has sinned against you; he told me to come to you so that you might forgive him." And in this way, when they met each other they would kiss one another. How did he draw men close to the Torah? When he knew of a man who had sinned he became friends with him and (by receiving him kindly) showed him a shining face. Then that man would be ashamed and say, "If this righteous man knew my evil deeds, how far from me he would go." And because of this he would return to good (ways). This is what the prophet testified of him, "He walked with Me in peace and uprightness, and did turn many away from iniquity."⁷¹

1:13

A name made great is a name destroyed⁷²

He whose name has spread afar because of rulership and mastery will quickly be destroyed because mastery buries its possessors. 711

is an expression of נִסְחָה spreading. The Targum of נִסְחָה is 711.73

He who does not increase his knowledge

One who does not add to one's knowledge.

Decreases it

What one has already learned will cease from his mouth and one will forget his learning. And there are some who read תאק⁷⁴ (instead of תאק), as if to say, one will be gathered to his people and will die before his time.

And he who does not study:

Is worse than "he who does not increase his knowledge;" therefore, "he deserves to die," that is, he should die; as they said, "One may tear an Am Haarez like a fish.....and (this means) along his back."⁷⁸

And he who makes a worldly use of the crown (of the Torah) shall pass away

One who uses the crown of the Torah like a man who uses his tools "shall pass away" and leave the world; for כתר in Arabic means crown.⁷⁶

And there are some who explain (the word) "crown" by the initial letters:⁷⁷ Taf (ת), Gimmel (ג), Aleph (א) as (representing) student תלמיד , man גברא , another man אחרים ; (meaning) one is forbidden to use students who are not his own.

And I heard an explanation of "and he who makes a wordly use of the crown of the Torah" as (meaning) one who uses the Tetragrammaton "shall pass away" and perish for he has no share in the world to come.⁷⁸
1:14

If I am not for myself

If I do not perform merit for myself who will perform it for me?

And if I am only for myself

And even if I have performed merit for myself what is this merit?
And of what importance is it in comparison to what I am obligated to perform?

And if not now,

In this world.

When?

For after death it is impossible to perform merit any longer. Another explanation: "If not now" (means) - in the days of youth, "then when?" Perhaps in old age I will not have the opportunity.

1:15

Fix a period for thy study of the Torah

So that your basic occupation both day and night will be in the Torah, and when you weary of the study you may work; not that your basic occupation be work so that when you have free time from work you will occupy yourself in Torah.

And I found written "Fix a period for thy study of the Torah" (with the meaning) that you should not make it harder for yourself and easier for others, or harder for others and easier for yourself, but rather let your "Torah" be fixed the same for you as for others. And thus it says in Ezra, "For Ezra had set his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach Israel statutes and ordinances"⁷⁹... just as he set his heart to do, so he taught the children of Israel.

Say little and do much

As we find about Abraham our father of blessed memory, who initially said, "And I will fetch a morsel of bread..."⁸⁰ but in the end "... fetched a calf tender and good..."⁸¹

And receive all men

When you entertain guests in your house do not show a downcast face, for anyone who has a downcast face is regarded as if having given nothing even if he had given all the gifts in the world. Shammai gave three forewarnings regarding the three categories that Jeremiah mentioned: wise man, mighty man, and rich man.⁸² Regarding the wise man he said, "Fix a period for thy study of Torah." Regarding the rich man he said, "Say little and do much." Regarding the mighty man he said, "Receive all men with a cheerful countenance," that is, one should conquer his evil inclination and fight against his evil impulses. And we learn: "Who is mighty? He who subdues his passions."⁸³

1:16

Provide thyself a teacher

In regard to a legal decision under an emergency. If a case comes to you and you are in doubt about it, "provide thyself a teacher."

Be quit of doubt

And do not render judgment on it alone. "For there was a case with Rabba, that when a terefah was submitted to him for inspection he sent and gathered all the slaughterers of Martha Mehasia in order, as he put it, that each of them should carry a chip from the beam (share equal responsibility)."⁸⁴

And accustom not thyself to give tithes by a conjectural estimate

For one who sets aside tithes by conjecture will not escape harm. If one gives less than what is correct to be given, his tithes are correct but his fruits are improper. And if one gives more than what is correct to be given, then his fruits are proper but his tithes

are incorrect.

And I have found naught of better service than silence

One who hears his own shame and remains silent.⁸⁵

1:17

Not learning but doing is the chief thing

Know that silence is good, for even "learning" (which is) explanation and talking about Torah of which you have no thing better, is not the essential criteria for the receiving of reward, but it is because of the deed (itself). And it would have been better for one who expounded but did not fulfill (what he said) to have kept quiet and not to have talked.

And whoso is profuse of words causes sin

For this we find with Eve who added words and said, "...God hath said: Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it..."⁸⁶ She added 'touching' which was not forbidden and so the snake pushed her until she touched it and said to her, "Just as there was no death in touching it, so there will be no death in eating." And in this way she came to sin in that she ate the fruit.⁸⁷ This was what Solomon says, "Do not add to His word, lest He chastise you, and you will be caught lying."⁸⁸

1:18

Is the world preserved

The civilization of mankind exists. This - "Is the world preserved" - is unlike the "The world is based" previously mentioned.⁸⁹

By judgment

To free the innocent and to condemn the guilty.

By truth

That man not "...lie one to another."⁹⁰

By peace

Between kingdoms and between man and his fellow man.

CHAPTER II

2:1

Rabbi said.....that a man should choose for himself

That one should choose.¹

That which is an honor to him who does it, and which also brings him honor from mankind

That which will be pleasing to him, and which is (also) pleasing to mankind. This will come to be when one follows a middle of the road policy² in every matter of human qualities and does not lean toward either of the two extremes. For if one is extremely miserly, he acquires praise for himself, in as much as he accumulates much money, however people do not praise him for this character trait; and if one squanders more (money) than he should those people who receive it from him praise him, but this is not praiseworthy to the one who does this, and is not beneficial to him because eventually he becomes poor as a result of this. But the character trait of philanthropy which is a mean between miserliness and squandering, is honorable to the one doing it, since he watches his money and does not squander more than is fitting.

And also brings him honor from mankind

For people praise him when he gives (to charity) as much as is proper for him to give. And the same rule applies to all the rest of the character traits.

For thou knowest not the grant of reward for each precept

In the Torah it is not explicitly stated (what will be) one's reward for fulfilling the positive commandments nor one's punishment for not

doing them, but these punishments for the negative commandments are stated: (namely) stoning; burning; decapitation; strangulation;³ extinction; and death by Heaven;⁴ and punishment of lashes⁵ --- the more lenient punishment for the lighter transgression, and the more severe punishment for the more severe transgression.

Reckon the loss incurred by the fulfillment of a precept

That which you lose from your business and your money due to your occupation with the precept (reckoned) against the reward that will be credited to you because of it in this world or the world to come, for it will be greater than that loss.

And the gain gotten by a transgression

The benefit that you derive from the transgression as against the loss that you are destined to have because of it.

2:2

Some worldly occupation

Work or business.

For the labor demanded by them both makes sin to be forgotten

For the Torah weakens man's strength and work grinds and breaks the body, and as a result of this one's evil inclination ceases.

All study of the Torah without work

And if you should say, "Toil always in Torah and its exertion will cause sin to be forgotten, so what need is there for work?" Therefore he warned saying, "All study of the Torah without work must in the end be futile." In as much as it is impossible for one (to study) without food, and so, then, one must rob people (in order to eat) which causes one's learning to be forgotten.

Act with them for Heaven's sake:

And not in order to aggrandize oneself, saying, "I did thus-and-thus for the congregation."

Sustains them

For the merit of the patriarchs of the congregation and their eternal righteousness is that which sustains those acting with them in bringing to light (i. e., recognition) their (the assistants' own) righteousness, and not because of the noble efforts of those acting with them.

And as for you (God will then say) I account you worthy of great reward

Even though the matter does not come to a good conclusion through your deeds. But because of the merit of the patriarchs of the congregation I account you worthy of reward just as if you had accomplished this saving act in behalf of Israel, in as much as you acted for Heaven's sake.

Another explanation: And all who act with the community by persuading and coercing it to perform a precept, i. e. -- charity and freeing of captives, should act with them for Heaven's sake. For the merit of the community's forefathers aids them (the community) to give whatever amount has been assessed upon them, even if it be much money, and the righteousness that they shall perform shall eternally stand for them. And I account you, who are acting by persuading the community to perform this precept, worthy of reward as if you had performed this precept with your very own money.

And Rambam explained, "And as for you, (God will then say), I account

you worthy of reward as if you had wrought it all yourselves" (as meaning) that if, at the time when you are acting with the community, you stopped performing some particular precept because of the community's needs, I account you worthy of reward, as though you performed that very precept that you stopped doing.

2:3

Be ye guarded in your relations with the ruling power

Even though you engaged with the needs of the community, must become acquainted with the ruling power (in order) to watch over public affairs, still "Be ye guarded...etc."

2:4

Do His will as if it were thy will

Spend your money on Heaven's desires as if it were your will, just as you would spend it on your own desires. For if you do this "He may do thy will as if it were His will," that is, He will deal benevolently towards you.

That He may nullify the will of others

He may annul the plans of all those who rise up against you with evil intent. And I have heard that this is only a respectful way to speak of God, and, behold, it is as though it were written, "So that He may nullify His will because of your will." This is similar to what they said in chapter למאן דעביד פריצות, "whosoever performs a precept properly, even an (evil) decree of seventy years will be nullified for him."⁶

Separate not thyself from the congregation

But participate in their troubles, for one who separates himself from

the community, does not participate in the comfort of the community.⁷

Trust not in thyself until the day of thy death

For behold, Yechanan, the High Priest, served in the high priesthood for eighty years and at the end became a Sadducee.⁸

Judge not thy fellow man until thou art come into his place

If you saw that your friend confronted by a test and failed, do not judge him guilty until you have come to a similar test and have succeeded.

And say not anything which cannot be understood, in the hope that it will be understood in the end

That is, do not let your words be doubtful so that it is impossible to understand them initially and at first thought, and (do not) rely (upon the fact) that if the listener meditates deeply over them he will ultimately understand them. For this will cause men to err by your words, and perhaps they will err and leave Judaism because of you. Another explanation: Do not even reveal your secret confidentially and say that there is no one here who will hear you, for the end result is that it will be heard, "For the bird of Heaven will carry the sound..."^{9,10} And the text reading according to this interpretation is "The result is that it will be heard."

But Rashill reads it, "And do not say 'something that is possible to be studied now, can be studied later.'" For he is referring to words of Torah; (namely) Do not say regarding words of Torah that you can learn now, that you will learn them later, but incline your ear and learn immediately.

When I have leisure

From my business, then I shall engage in Torah.

2:5

An empty-headed man

One empty from everything and who does not even know the nature of business. And such a person is worse than an "ignorant person." The Aramaic of "And the land be not desolate" is "And the land be not empty."¹²

Nor can an ignorant person be truly pious

But it is possible that he be "a sin-fearing man," for he is an expert in the nature of business.

Nor can the diffident learn

For one who is ashamed to ask, lest others mock him, will forever remain in his doubts.

Nor the passionate

The teacher who gets angry with students when they question him cannot teach properly. But it is necessary that one be friendly toward one's students in regards to matters of Halacha.

Nor is everyone who excels in business wise

As it is written, "Neither is it beyond the sea..."¹³ (meaning) the Torah is not found in those who travel across the sea.¹⁴

In a place where there are no men

To lead the court and render legal decisions.

2:6

Because thou drownest others they have drowned thee

You were an evil man and robbed other men and drowned them in the river, so they meted out the same punishment against you.

They that drowned thee, shall themselves be drowned

For the matter to kill you was not handed down to their hands but to the Beth Din.¹⁵ But the Holy One Blessed Be He delivered you to them

for "Evil is brought about through the agency of evil men..."¹⁶ and He is destined afterwards to demand your death from them.

2:7

The more flesh, the more worms

For one who eats and drinks excessively until he becomes corpulent and fat has many worms upon him in the grave, "For worms are as hard to the corpse as a needle is to living flesh."¹⁷ And this Tanna teaches us that all (over) indulgences are bad for man except the over-abundance of Torah, of wisdom and of charity.

The more anxiety

Lest someone kidnap him from the palace or lest robbers attack and kill him. And one pious man used to pray, "May God save me from שדאי רב."¹⁸ And they asked him what שדאי רב was. He said to them, "That he have much property scattered in many locations and that he have to divide his attention to think about this place and about that place."

The more wives, the more witchcraft

A continuous systematic order is given. Man first adorns himself and eats and drinks and becomes fat, and then seeks to increase his property. After he has increased his property and sees that he has enough to support many wives, he acquires many wives. And after he has acquired many wives, each one needs a maid-servant to serve her, so he acquires many maid-servants. And since he has a large household he needs fields and vineyards to supply wine and food for it, so he acquires many slaves to work the fields and vineyards. Therefore they are taught in this order.

The more Torah, the more life

As it is written, "For that is thy life and the length of thy days."¹⁹

The more wisdom

For he gives meaning to his words and his logical arguments settle in the minds of his listeners.

The more schooling

Many students gather and come to hear his logical arguments. And there are some who read, "The more schooling the more wisdom"²⁵ (meaning) if one has many students, they sharpen him and increase and add to his wisdom.

The more counsel

One who takes much counsel.

The more understanding

Deduces one thing from another by means of the counsel that his counselors give him.

The more charity, the more peace

As it is said, "And the work of righteousness shall be peace..."²¹
2:8

Ascribe not any merit to thyself

Saying, "I learned much Torah." And since he did not neglect and leave unstudied. Scripture, Mishnah, Law, and Aggadah, he could therefore say thusly.²²

A cemented cistern

Read **וְכַדְוֵהוּ** and not **וְכִדְוֵהוּ**,²³ as if, "Like a cistern coated over with lime."

Which loses not a drop

Likewise he does not forget one thing from his learning.

Happy is she that bore him

He is endowed with such good character traits that the whole world says about him, "Happy is she who bore him."

And some say, because she caused him to become a sage. For she went around to all the Houses of Study that were in her city and said to them, "Please pray for this embryo that is in my womb to be a sage." And from the day that he was born, she did not remove his bed from the Beth Midrash so that only words of Torah would enter into his ears.²⁴

A pious man

One who acts beyond the letter of the Law.

A fearer of sin

One who makes it more stringent upon himself and forbids himself permitted things because of his fear that he might sin. For if this is not the case, what is so great about him? Even an ignoramus could be a "fearer of sin."²⁵

A spring flowing with ever-sustained vigor

His mind was so broad that he could add argumentation and logical reasoning from his own thinking.

Abba Saul said in his name

Of Rabban Yochanan, the son of Zakkai.

And Elazar the son of Arach in the other scale

I found written that Abba Saul was not in disagreement with the first Tanna, but that Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai said both things. And both statements are true for in matters of erudition and memory, Rabbi Eliezer

was superior, and in matters of acuteness and argumentation Rabbi Elazar, the son of Arach was superior.

2:9

A good eye

One who is satisfied with what he has and who does not seek additional things and who is not jealous when he sees that his friend has more than he does.

A good friend

One who reproves another when he sees him doing an improper thing.

A good neighbor

One who can be found near him both day and night, for a good colleague cannot be found near him at all times.

One who foresees the fruit of an action

One who looks and sees what is destined to be and because of this he reckons about the loss incurred by the fulfillment of a precept against its reward, and the gain gotten by a sin against its loss.²⁶

A good heart

For the heart is the motor force for all the rest of the faculties and is the source from which all the functions flow forth. And even though the functions have special limbs, nevertheless, the power that initiates all movements is in the heart. Therefore, Rabbi Elazar said, "A good heart," and because of this Rabban Yochanan, the son of Zakkai, said, "I approve the words of Rabbi Elazar, the son of Arach, rather than their words."

Which is the evil way that a man should shun?

He had to ask them this, since from their initial words, he did not understand that the evil way is the opposite of the good way, because

not everything that is good has as its opposite something evil. For the character trait of piety in which one acts beyond the letter of the Law is good, but one who is not a pious man and bases (his life) on rabbinic judiciary decision is not bad, And it was possible to say that if frugality, which is "a good eye", is the good way, still the quest for additional things is not the evil way, because one does not damage anyone with this. And this likewise applies to the rest of the character traits. Therefore he had to ask them, "Which is the evil way that a man should shun?"

One who borrows and does not repay

This is the opposite of "one who sees the fruit of an action." For if one does not repay, he will not find anyone to credit him when he is downcast in famine. He did not just say, "He who does not see the fruit of an action..." because it is possible for a man who does not see the fruit of an action not to come into this stumbling block, so that he might save himself when this future event arrives.

But the righteous dealeth graciously and giveth

The Holy One, Blessed Be He, who is the Righteous One of the world has compassion and gives the creditor what that man has borrowed from him (and has not repaid) and does not punish him (the creditor) so that the borrower remains obligated to the All Present.

2:10

They each said three things

About manners, ethics, and character traits; whereas, these men said many things concerning what was forbidden and what was allowed, and

what was obligatory and what was non-obligatory.

Or it may mean, they were in the habit of saying these three things.

Let the honor of thy fellow-man be as dear to thee as thine own

And when will this be? When "you are not easily moved to anger."

For if you anger easily, it is impossible not to offend you friend's

honor --- this is one maxim. "And repent one day before thy death" ---

this makes two. And the third, "Warm thyself by the fire of the wise, etc."

Repent one day before thy death

Since no one knows when he will die, one should make penitence today

lest he die the next day.

But beware of their glowing coals

That you do not behave frivolously in their presence.

Lest thou be burnt

That you not be punished by them.

The bite of the fox

Its cure is difficult, for his teeth are thin, curved, and twisted;

and the doctor has to make an incision in the flesh with a surgeon's

knife and has to widen the bite.

Is the scorpion's sting

Worse than a snake bite.

And their hiss

Their utterances.

Is the serpent's hiss

Is like the heat that leaves the serpent's mouth, for when it hisses

it burns.

Another explanation: This serpent does not accept incantation like

the other serpents, as it is written, "Which hearkeneth not to the voice of charmers..."²⁷ Thus if you will anger a sage and come to appease him, he will not accept appeasement.

2:11

The evil eye

Like "an evil eye."²⁸ Since one is not satisfied with what he has, he goes around after other things. And some explain, "the evil eye" (as meaning) one who sets "the evil eye" on one's friend's money or children and harms him.

And hatred of his fellow-creatures

Hatred for no reason. And Rambam explains it as one who despises human company and likes to dwell alone. And I heard (the meaning as) a difficult man (to get along with) who brings human hatred upon himself and causes everyone to hate him.

2:12

Qualify thyself for the study of the Torah

So that you will not say, "Since my father was a sage and my grandfather was a sage, and (since) the Torah returns to its lodging place, I do not have to seek it."²⁹

And let all thy deeds be done for the sake of Heaven

Even when you are engaged in eating and drinking and work, do not do it with the intention of giving pleasure to your body, but so that you will be healthy to perform the will of your Maker.

2:13

Be careful to read the Shema

To recite it at its time, and likewise to pray each prayer of the Amidah³⁰ at its time.

A fixed mechanical prayer

Like a man who has placed upon him an obligation of a set nature and says, "When can I set myself free from this obligation?" Or "a fixed mechanical prayer" may mean like a man who is designated to read a chapter or a section³¹ and who says it merely reading, and not in a supplicatory manner as one who is seeking mercy.

"For He is gracious and compassionate..."³²

He wants supplicatory prayer and He has compassion immediately by means of these supplicatory prayers.

And be not wicked in thine own esteem

Don't do anything today by which you will cause yourself trouble the next day.

And Rambam explained, "And be not wicked in thine own esteem" as if (meaning) Do not presume yourself to be an evil man, for as a result of this you will come to complete depravity.

And I heard, "And be not wicked" refers to this thing --- that "you separate yourself from the congregation³³" and stand "separately."

2:14

To the unbeliever

This is an expression of a discarded object³⁴ (meaning) one who degrades the Torah and regards it as an discarded object. Or it may mean, one who makes himself a discarded object and does not care about himself by worrying that evil might come upon him because he despises

the Torah or its students.

Know also before whom thou toilest

With this answer that you give the unbeliever, so that your heart will not become seduced to lean toward his position.

2:15

The day is short

The life of this world is short.

And the work is great

The Torah, "The measure thereof is longer than the earth..."³⁵

And the Master is urgent

As it is said "...But thou shall meditate therein day and night..."³⁶

It is not thy duty to complete the work

The Holy One Blessed Be He did not engage you to finish all of it so that you would lose your reward if you did not complete it. But lest you say, "I shall neither learn nor receive a reward."

But neither art thou free to desist from it

The yoke to work is placed upon you against your will.

In the time to come

In the world to come.

CHAPTER III

3:1

Akavya.....from fetid drop

A drop of semen. Even though at the time of conception it is not fetid since it does not become fetid in the woman's womb until three days have past and when it becomes fetid it is unfit to fertilize; nevertheless they call it a fetid drop because it is very near becoming fetid immediately after being outside the woman's womb. And he who understands that he comes "from a fetid drop" is saved from pride; he who understands that he is destined to go "to a place of dust, worms, and maggots" is saved from lust and desire for money; and he who understands that "he will in the future have to give account and reckoning" abstains from sin and does not stumble in transgression.

3:2

For the welfare of the government

And even the gentile (government).

Would swallow each other alive

As it is written, "And makest man as the fishes of the sea..."¹
Just as with fish of the sea, where the larger one swallows the other, so too with people, were it not for the fear of the government, the greater one would swallow his fellowman.²

"...They that feared the Lord spoke one with another..."³

Thus there are two people.

"...And keep silence..."⁴

This is an expression of "a still small voice,"⁵ for it is the habit of one who studies alone to study in a whisper.

"...Because He hath laid it upon him."⁶

It is as if the giving of the Torah was entirely for his sake alone.

3:3

And have spoken there no words of Torah

They absolve their obligation with the grace after meal⁷ that they bless at the table, and it is considered as though they spoke there words of Torah. So I have heard.

Of sacrifices to dead idols

The offering of idol worship, as it is written, "They joined themselves also unto Baal of Peor, and ate sacrifices to the dead."⁸

"...Full of filthy vomit..."⁹

And idol worship is called " **נִבְזָז** - vomit," as it is written, "Thou shalt say unto it, 'Get thee hence!'"¹⁰

"And no place is clean"¹¹

Because they did not mention the name of the All Present, Blessed Be He, at the table.

To which the Scripture may be applied, "...And he spake to me: 'This is the table which is before the Lord.'"¹²

Immediately after one has spoken words of Torah, the table is called "A table which is before God." And some say that (the interpretation) comes from the first part of the verse, as it is written: "The altar, three cubits high,.....was of wood..."¹³ Do not read "cubits" but "mothers"¹⁴ as if the traditional vocalization were **נִיבָז**.¹⁵

"Three" stands for Torah, Prophets, and Writings; and some say Scrip-

ture, Mishnah, and Gemara, which a man has to speak about at the table, whereupon it is called a "...table which is before God." Thus Rashi explained.

3:4

He who keeps awake at night and goes on his way alone

For night is the time for demons, and whoever "...goes on his way alone" is in danger because of robbers and other misfortunes. But if one should think about words of Torah, it (the Torah) would guard him.

3:5

The yoke of the kingdom

The burden of king and officers.

Worldly care

The labor and bother of livelihood, because his work is blessed.

But whoso casts off from the yoke of Torah

One who says, "The yoke of Troah is difficult and I cannot bear it."

3:6

Ten who sat in judgment

Thus we read it.

"...In the congregation of God..."¹⁷

And there is no "congregation" of less than ten people, as it is written concerning the spies, "How long shall I bear with this evil congregation?"¹⁸ Joshua and Caleb were excluded, so there were ten.¹⁹

And whence can it be shown that the same applies to five? Because it is said, "In the midst of the judges He judgeth."²⁰

Three judges and the two litigents.²¹

And whence can it be shown that the same applies to three? Because it is said, "And hath founded his vault (**קונו**) upon the earth..."²²

Fire, air, and water which make three: "And hath founded it upon the earth..." -- (meaning) they surround the foundation of the earth.

So you have that three called "vault."

Then too we find that three is called "vault," namely, "...a bunch of hyssop..."²³ which are three stalks.²⁴

And there are some versions in which it is written:

"And whence can it be shown that the same applies to five? Because it is said, 'And hath founded His vault upon the earth...'" For man binds together (**קונו**) with his one hand which has five fingers, which implies that the fingers of the hand are called **קונו**.²⁵

And at the beginning of the text it says, "It is He that buildeth His upper chambers in the heaven," that is, the Schechinah²⁶ which is in heaven descends to earth when there is a "vault,"²⁷ engaging in Torah there.²⁸

"...Because He hath laid it upon him"²⁹

An expression of sheltering. The Targum of "Thou shalt screen" (**תסות**) is **לסות**,³⁰ that is, the Shechinah shelters him.

3:7

Give unto him of what is His

Do not refuse to occupy yourself with the desires of Heaven either physically or monitarily, seeing that you and your money are His.

How fine is that tree, how fine is that field

This applies to all ⁴¹¹ talk. But he (the sage) spoke about something

commonplace, for it is the manner of travelers to talk about what they see immediately before them. And some say that he (the sage) proclaimed a great thing, i. e. even though because of this one says the blessing "Blessed.....who hast such as these in thy world,"³¹ nevertheless we regard him as if he "forfeited his life" because he stopped his learning.

Field

The furrow of a plow, as, "Break up for you a fallow ground..."³²
3:8

Whoso forgets one word of his study

Because one has not reviewed we regard him as if he had forfeited his life, for because of his forgetting he permits the forbidden thing and as a result transgression is caused by him; thus his inadvertent act of transgression is regarded as a willful act of transgression. Or "As if he forfeited his life" may mean, that since that study used to guard him, now that he has forgotten it, it no longer guards him.

Even if a man's study has been too hard for him

In that it was difficult for him, and because of the difficulty therein, he forgot it.

3:9

He in whom the fear of sin comes before wisdom

I heard that one places the fear of sin before one's wisdom in one's thinking since one thinks to himself, "I shall learn so that I can be sin-fearing." And this is similar to what they said, "First in thought is the completed work."³³

His wisdom shall endure

For wisdom brings him to what his heart desires and he enjoys it (wisdom).

But he in whom wisdom comes before the fear of sin

One who does not learn to perform (precepts); in as much as his heart is not inclined to be sin-fearing, his wisdom does not endure. Because wisdom does not let one follow one's obduracy, one loaths and despises it and sets it aside.

He whose deeds exceed his wisdom

Here it teaches about one who is careful about positive commandments and before (referring to) "He whose fear of sin preceeds his wisdom" it taught of one who is careful about prohibitions.

3:10

He in whom the spirit of his fellow-creatures takes delight

Everyone who is loved below (earth) is certainly loved above (heaven).

Morning sleep

One who goes to sleep and sleeps until the time of the reading of the Shema has passed.

And midday wine

Draws away a man's heart,³⁴ as it is written, "...To pamper my flesh with wine..."³⁵ and brings one to drunkenness.

And children's talk

Stops their fathers from engaging Torah.

And attending the houses of assembly of the ignorant

Who enter and talk about useless things.

3:11

He who profanes things sacred

One who causes things dedicated for the altar sacrifices to become abomination,³⁶ remains,³⁷ and defilement, or one who makes inappropriate use of and derives benefit from either things dedicated for the altar sacrifices or the objects dedicated (for their value) to be used for the needs of the Temple building.

And despises the Festivals

One who works on the days of Chol Ha-Moed³⁸ or practices weekday behavior on them with regard to eating and drinking.

And puts his fellow man to shame in public

When one is embarrassed his face first becomes red and afterwards it becomes pale, because the soul has two movements -- one outside and one inside. And when people embarrass a man, the soul first moves to the outside, as one full of anger whose face becomes red; and when he cannot find any way how to remove this shame from his face, he inwardly worries, and the soul enters inside because of anguish, and his face becomes pale and white. This is what they said in reference to paleness, "the ruddiness departing and paleness supervening."³⁹

And makes void the covenant

In that one does not circumcise, or one circumcises and draws his foreskin over to cover the circumcision so that it might not be seen that he was circumcised.

Who makes the Torah bear a meaning

One who misconstrues and misinterprets the Torah, like one who translates, "And you shall not give any of thy seed to set them apart to Molech..."⁴⁰ as "You shall not give any of thy seed to become with a child in Romedom..."⁴¹ which is not the simple meaning of the verse. And included in this (category) is one who gives reproachful ex-

positions.

Another explanation of "who makes the Torah bear a meaning" (means) one who arrogantly dares to transgress the Torah in public without shame.

Even though knowledge of the Torah and good deeds be his

If he did not repent from any of the transgressions that he had, even though suffering came upon him and he died with suffering, still he has no part in the world to come. But if he did repent prior to his death then you have nothing that can stand up in the way of repentance.

3:12

Be submissive to a superior

"Be submissive" to serve and minister to the great and old man sitting at the head of an academy.

And affable to a suppliant

You do not have to make yourself so submissive to a young man whose hairs are black, but serve him with graciousness and deliberation.

And receive, etc.

Serve cheerfully before every man, be he old or young. **בפניו** is the same as **בפניו**,⁴² and the meaning of **בפניו** in Hebrew is "opposite."⁴³

Another explanation of "Be submissive to a superior" is that at your beginnings when you are a youth be submissive to perform the will of your Creator so that you will be pleasing to Him in your old age when your face has become blackened by age.

3:13

The Massorah is a fence to the Torah

The Massorah⁴⁴ that the sages handed down to us with words in the Torah written defectively⁴⁵ and completely⁴⁶ is a fence and a fortification to the Written Law, for by means of them we understand how to perform many precepts. For example -- "In booths"⁴⁷ (written three times) twice defective and once complete, from which we learn to make a suitable Succah with three side walls;⁴⁸ and for example, "The appointed seasons of the Lord which ye shall proclaim"⁴⁹ which is written defective in three places "...to indicate that 'you' (may fix the festivals) even if you err inadvertently; 'you' even if you err deliberately; 'you' even if you are misled."⁵⁰

Tithes are a fence to riches

"You shall surely tithe..."⁵¹ "Give tithe so that you may be enriched."⁵²

Vows are a fence to abstinence

When a man begins abstinence and is fearful lest he transgress, he places upon himself a verbal oath that he will not do such-and-such and by this means he conquers his evil inclination.

A fence to wisdom is silence

To what do we refer? If it is to silence from words of Torah, behold it is written, "But thou shalt meditate...etc."⁵³ If it refers to silence from slander, gossip, and curse, then these are from the Torah. Thus he speaks only about silence from secular talk, for man should decrease talking about this as much as possible. And concerning these men Solomon said, "Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise."⁵⁴

45
3:14

But it was by a special love that it was made known to him

Rambam explained that God showed a special love toward man for He informed him and said to him, "See, I have created you in the image (of God)." For whoever does good to his fellowman and informs him about the good that he did to him shows greater love than if he had done good to him and did not consider it important to inform him about the good he did to him.

And one can interpret, "But it was a special love that it was made known to them" (as meaning) a revealed and publicized love, for the All Present, Blessed Be He, did not have only a secret love with Adam, but a love revealed and known to all.

As it is said, "For.....a good doctrine..."⁵⁵

All the acts of creation about which it is said, "And God saw....that it was good..."⁵⁶ were created only for the Torah which is called "doctrine," as it says, "My doctrine shall drop as the rain."⁵⁷

3:15

Everything is foreseen

Everything that man does in the most hidden place is revealed before Him.

Yet freedom of choice is given

It is within man's power to do good and evil, as it is written, "See, I have set before thee this day, life,....etc."⁵⁸

The world is judged by grace

By the attribute of mercy. Nevertheless not everyone is equalized by this attribute, because "all is according to the amount of work." Whoever has done many good deeds is given much mercy and whoever

has done few good deeds is given less mercy. Another explanation of "Yet all is according to the amount of work" (is that) according to the majority of a man's deeds is one judged. If the majority are meritable then one is innocent; if the majority are sinful then one is guilty. And Rambam explained, "Everything is foreseen" (as meaning) all man's actions, what he did and what he is destined to do, are all revealed before Him. But do not say, "Since the Holy One, Blessed Be He, knows what man will do, then man is forced in his actions to be a righteous or an evil man," for freedom of choice is given to man to perform good and evil, and there is nothing at all that can force him to anything. And since this is the case "the world is judged by grace," (meaning) to punish the wicked and to give a good reward to the righteous, for the sinner sinned by his own volition and deserves to be punished, while the righteous man was righteous by his own volition and deserves to receive a reward.

Yet all is according to the amount of work

One's reward is increased corresponding to how often one repeats and consistently performs good deeds; for one who divides on hundred gold pieces for charity for one hundred times cannot be compared to one who gives them all at one time. And the reading of Rambam's (text) is, "Yet all is according to the amount of work, but not according to the work."

3:16

Everything is given on pledge

"A man's feet are responsible for him; they lead him to the place where he is wanted."⁵⁹

A net is spread

Suffering and death.

The shop is open

And men enter there and buy on credit.

And the dealer gives credit

And believes anyone who comes to take. Thus men sin every day and the Holy One Blessed Be He waits for them until their time comes.

And the ledger lies open

In which to write the credit, so that He will not forget.

And the hand writes

So that you not say, "Even though the ledger is open there are times when the Dealer is busy and does not write everything." He therefore said, "And the hand writes..."

And whosoever wishes to borrow...etc.

Here is the above "And freedom of choice is given,"⁶⁰ in as much as no man is forced to borrow against his will.

But the collectors

Suffering and evil afflictions.

Whether he be content

The times that one remembers his obligation and says, "You judged me fairly."

Or not

The times that one forgets and complains of injustice against the judgment of the All Present, Blessed Be He.

And they have that whereon they can rely in their demand

Upon the ledger and upon the dealer who is trustworthy with the ledger.

So does this suffering rely upon the actions of man which are remembered by the All Present, Blessed Be He, even though they be forgotten by man.

And the judgment is a judgment by truth

For the Holy One, Blessed Be He, does not deal imperiously with His creatures.⁶¹

And everything is prepared for the feast

Both the righteous and the evil have a share in the world to come after suffering has collected their obligations from them.

3:17

Where there is no Torah, etc.

One's business transactions with his fellow man is not ethical.

Where there is no knowledge, etc.

"Knowledge" is that which gives meaning to something, while "understanding" is that which lets one deduce one thing from another but which does not give something meaning. If there is no knowledge to give meaning to something "there is no understanding" for if one does not know the meaning of something it is as if one does not know it. But irregardless understanding is that which comes first and therefore,

"where there is no understanding, there is no knowledge."

Where there is no meal, there is no Torah

How can one who has nothing to eat busy himself with Torah?

Where there is no Torah, there is no meal

If one has not Torah what use is the meal that one possesses? It would be better for one if he had no meal and died of hunger.

3:18

The laws concerning the sacrifices of birds

The bird sacrifices are called **בִּזְיוֹן** from the expression "If a bird's nest..."⁶³ And there are concerning them many stringent laws, i. e. -- "If an obligatory offering is confused with a freewill offering," or "a burnt-offering which is done above this line," "with a sin offering, whose action is done under the line."⁶⁴

And the purification of women

The laws of menstruation, for when a woman lost count and erred⁶⁵ she had to watch herself until she returned to her starting time of menstruation. And there are times when she must immerse ninety-five times according to the words of he who says, "Immersion at its right time is a precept."⁶⁶

3:18

Are ordinances of moment

The essence of the Oral Law for which one receives reward.

Astronomy

The subject of the constellations' movements.

And Geomatria

Counting of the (numerical values of) letters.⁶⁷

Are the aftercourses of wisdom

Like desserts that people are accustomed to eat at the end of a meal to conclude in a pleasurable manner, so these wisdoms render honor to their possessors in the eyes of people.

CHAPTER IV

4:1

Ben Zoma¹

People used to call him by the name of his father because he did not live long, and because he was not ordained to be called Rabbi. And likewise (was the case with) Ben Azzai, both of whom had the name Simon.²

Who is wise

Thus he said, "Who is a wise man, who is worthy to be praised for his wisdom?"

He who learns from all men

Even though that man be inferior to him. Since one does not consider one's honor but learns from one's inferiors it is recognized that his wisdom is for the sake of heaven and not to exalt and glorify himself with it.

As it is said, "I have more understanding than all my teachers..."³

And the end of the verse is, "...For Thy testimonies are my meditation:" that is, I learned Torah from all my teachers even from those inferior to me and I did not worry about my honor; "...For Thy testimonies are my meditation," (meaning) Because my whole intent was for Heaven alone. And likewise:

Who is Mighty

Who is worthy to be praised for his might? "He who subdues his passions."

As it is said, "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty..."⁴

This is the explanation of the verse: Slowness to anger which results from the might of subduing one's passions and not because of timid nature is good. And likewise one who rules over his spirit after he returns from conquering a city is better than a king, who after having conquered a city, receives the men who rebelled against him, and has control over his spirit and does not kill them.

Who is rich

Who is worthy to be praised for his wealth? "He who rejoices in his portion."

Who is worthy of honor?

In as much as whoever merits these three previously mentioned qualities (namely): wisdom, strength, and wealth, renders honor to himself in the eyes of God and of man, but mankind does not necessarily honor him because of them; therefore, the Tanna supplimented this and said, "Whoever has these qualities, and renders honor to himself; what should he do so that others render him honor? He should honor his fellow man."

"...For them that honor Me, I will honor..."⁵

This is a Kal Vehomer.⁶ If God, who is the King of Honor, and who created everything in His world only for His honor, honors those who honor Him, how much the more so should mere flesh and blood!

"...And they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed."⁷

We learn the humility of the Holy One, Blessed Be He; He did not say, "I shall curse them that despise Me," but, "And they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed," (meaning) through their own actions. But he stressed the righteous man's honor (more than His own) as it is said,

"...And him who curses, you, I shall curse..."⁸

4:2

For one good deed draws another good deed in its train

It is the way of the world, that it is easy for one who does one good deed to do another; but it is difficult for one who begins with transgressions to stop doing them. And furthermore, "For the reward of a good deed is a good deed" (means) that Heaven aids and gives the opportunity to one who has performed one good deed to perform another, in order to give him a reward for both of them. The same (explanation applies to) "And the wages of sin, etc." Another explanation of, "And the reward of a good deed is a good deed..." is that all that a man profits and enjoys while performing a good deed is accounted to him as a separate good deed. Thus one receives a reward for the good deed that one has done and also for the pleasure and the enjoyment that one has had in performing it.

And the wages of sin is sin

And the profit and enjoyment that a man has when he commits a sin are accounted to him as a separate sin. So he is chastised for the sin that he has done and also for the profit and enjoyment that he has had in performing it.

4:3

Despise not any man

Saying, "How can so-and-so do harm to me?"

And carp not

Do not put off something that you have to worry about; do not say, "It is unlikely that this will occur and there is no need to worry

about it (now)."

4:4

Be exceedingly lowly of spirit

Even though the "middle course" is praiseworthy with the rest of the character traits, such is not the case with the character trait of pride. Rather one should lean toward the extreme side of modesty, because pride is most despised, and moreover, because most of mankind is led astray by it "...and people do not hold themselves aloof from it."⁹ Therefore one has to keep an especially great distance from it.

4:5

He who learns in order to teach, Heaven will grant him the opportunity both to learn and to teach

Thus we read (the text). Its explanation is that whoever learns in order to busy himself always in Torah and does not have his mind on performing charitable acts toward his fellow man, --like Rabba who devoted himself to Torah and did not devote himself to charitable acts even though he was also asked to engage in charitable acts,¹⁰ --regardless "Heaven will grant him the opportunity both to learn and to teach," and his plans will be fulfilled. But "he who learns in order to practice," for he wishes to devote himself both to Torah and to being one who performs charitable acts, --like Abaye who devoted himself both to Torah and to charitable acts,¹¹ --Heaven grants him to fulfill his plans and he merits "...the opportunity to learn and to teach, to observe and to practice."

And some explain: "He who learns in order to teach" (meaning) so that he will be called Rabbi.¹² And they read "Heaven does not grant him

the opportunity both to learn and to teach." And in most of the books, I found it according to the first reading. And the essential meaning of:

Make not of the Torah a crown wherewith to aggrandize thyself

Is that you should not say, "I will be called Rabbi and they will make me the leader." But learn out of love, and honor will come in the end.¹³

Nor a spade wherewith to dig

And do not teach Torah in order to make an occupation from it, so that you earn your livelihood from it, as "a spade wherewith to dig."

For whoever does this is faithless to the holiness of Torah and deserves death from Heaven the same as one who utilizes things dedicated for the altar sacrifices.

And those who teach small children, take only a watching fee,¹⁴ for they watch that the children neither sin nor do damage; (and they take) a fee for (teaching) the Trope,¹⁵ for the Rabbi is not obligated to take trouble teaching students Trope.¹⁶ But taking wages for teaching is forbidden, as it is written, "And the Lord commanded me at that time to teach statutes and ordinances..."¹⁷ "...Even as the Lord my God commanded me..."¹⁸ Just as I (God, taught you) gratis, so you too, (should teach others) gratis.¹⁹

And likewise, the judge is forbidden to take wages for a legal decision, but may take wages for loss of time only, for it is a recognized fact how much he loses from the neglect of his work in order to hear the arguments of the litigents, but then only on the condition that he take equally from both of them, for if he should take more from

one (than the other) his decisions are invalid.

And those things from which the Torah allows a sage to derive a profit for himself (by means of) the words of the Torah are: that you sell his merchandise in the market before any other man's; that he be exempt from all taxes and duties and tax rates, and that the community be obligated to pay his head tax -- for even if he be rich and have much money he can lawfully ask that they exempt him (from paying); that if a sage be sick and oppressed by affliction and people bring him many expensive gifts out of respect to his learning, it is a good deed for him to take them, for this is not in the category of making profit from words of Torah, in as much as it is impossible for him to support himself in another way; and likewise that a sage whom the community has appointed over them as their leader and head and who busies himself with community needs may be permitted to take wages and pay from them, that are even greater than his required livelihood, so that his sustenance may be abundant, and because of this he will be great, revered, and feared in their sight as we find in the case of the High Priest where it is written of him, "And the priest that is highest among his brethren..."²⁰ and the sages expounded, "...make him great from what his brothers have," (namely) that his brothers, the priests endow him from their own (wealth).²¹ And the first sages who abstained from this practice did so because they had the character trait of piety and not because it was against Rabbinical law.

4:6

Whoso honors the Torah

One who expounds the defective²² and plene²³ words that are in the

Torah and gives an explanation for each stroke (on the letters),²⁴ saying that Torah contains nothing that is of no use, -- You have not honor of Torah greater than this.

Or it may mean, one who honors the Torah scroll and those who learn and busy themselves in it, all of which are included in the category of "Whoso honors the Torah."

4:7

He who shuns the judicial office

In a place where there is one greater than himself. Or it may mean that he tells the litigents that they should enter into a compromise.

Rids himself of hatred

For the party who leaves the court guilty hates the judge, for he thinks to himself, "He (the judge) did not interpret the law for my innocence."

Robbery

Lest he find the innocent party guilty and as a result a robbery is caused by him.

And vain swearing

Lest he make someone who does not have to swear, swear and as a result he causes a vain oath. Or it may mean that the Tanna called "a false oath" the same as "vain swearing;" for example: One who says (and swears) "I have not borrowed," although he did borrow, because at the time of swearing (God's name) came forth from his mouth in vain.²⁵

But he who presumptuously lays down decisions

Without deep thought and without reflection.

4:8

Judge not alone

Even though an individual who is expert may judge alone²⁶ it is the pious way that even an expert not judge alone, especially when the litigents have not accepted him as judge. But if the litigents have accepted him, he may judge alone and still remain within the pious way.²⁷

For none may judge alone save One

The Holy One, Blessed Be He, who is unique in His world.

Neither say

To your colleagues who disagree with you, "Accept my view, for I am an expert and would be able to judge even without your participation."

For the choice is theirs (to concur) and it is not for thee (to compel concurrence)

Since you asked them to join you, it is proper that the case be judged by the majority.

4:9

Whoso fulfills the Torah in the midst of poverty

For he is pressed for food but stops from work in order to engage in Torah.

Whoso neglects the Torah in the midst of wealth

Because of the large amount of money that one possesses, one must pay attention once here and once there, hence, one has no free time to engage in Torah.

4:10

Lessen thy toil for worldly goods.

Lessen your business toil and your work and let your main toil be in Torah.

Be humble of spirit before all men

To learn even from one who has less wisdom than you.

Many causes for neglecting it will present themselves to thee

Which will help you neglect it.

Another explanation: In the world there are many demons, namely, evil men and wild beasts which destroy; and the Holy One, Blessed be He, brings punishments upon you through their agency.

But if thou laborest in the Torah

He, Himself, and not any intermediary, will pay you the reward. And in this way the attribute of goodness is better than the attribute of punishment.

4:11

Advocate

An angel which is a good interceder.

Accuser

A bad interceder. The expression "accuser" is one who induces a quarrel,²⁸ and the expression "advocate" which is the opposite of "accuser" is one who hates quarreling.²⁹

4:12

Let the honor of thy disciple be as dear to thee as thine own

For thus we find about Moses, who said to Joshua, his disciple,

"Choose for us men..."³⁰ He made him equal to himself.³¹

And the honor of thy associate be like the reverence for thy master

For Aaron said to Moses, "Oh my lord..."³² Though he was older than his brother he still called him "my lord."³³

And the reverence for thy master like the fear of Heaven

As it is written, "My lord, Moses shut them in,"³⁴ (meaning) he destroyed them from the world. When they rebelled against you (Moses), it was as if they had rebelled against the Holy One Blessed Be He, and thus were deserving of extinction.³⁵

4:13

Be cautious in teaching

That your teaching be precise and proper.

For an error in teaching may amount to presumptuous sin

If you err in your instruction because you were not precise in your teaching and permit a forbidden thing, then the Holy One Blessed Be He regards you as if you had done it with premeditation.

There are three crowns

Written in the Torah, to which the Torah obligated one to render honor.

The crown of learning

It is written in it, "...And you shall honor the face of the old man,"³⁶ (meaning) one who has acquired wisdom.³⁷

The crown of priesthood

It is written in it, "And thou shalt sanctify him....he shall be holy unto thee..."³⁸

The crown of kingship

It is written in it, "...Thou shalt set him king over thee..."³⁹ so that his fear shall be over you.⁴⁰

But the crown of a good name

(This is) One who possesses good deeds and whose reputation is good because of his deeds; and we do not find a "crown," in the Torah for which one is obligated to honor him. Still this (crown) is more important than all the others because all three (formentioned) crowns are dependent upon it. For if one is a sage, and has a bad reputation, it is permitted to despise him.⁴¹ And if one is a high priest, as they say in Yoma, "May the descendents of the heathen, who do the work of Aaron, arrive in peace, but the descendent of Aaron who does not do the work of Aaron, he shall not come in peace."⁴² And if one be a king, it is written, "...Nor curse a ruler of thy people,"⁴³ (meaning) only when he acts as thy people act.⁴⁴

4:14

Wander forth to a home of the Torah

If there are no sages in your place.

And say not that the Torah will come after thee

Sages will come here.

For there thy associates will establish thee in possession of it

Do not rely (upon the fact) that when your colleagues come from the teacher's house, they will establish the Torah for you so that you learn from them what they learned from the teacher. Rather you yourself wander forth to the place of the teacher, because one who learns from the student's mouth is not the same as one who learns from the teacher's mouth.

Another explanation of "For there thy associates will establish thee

in possession of it." Why do I say to you, "Wander forth to a home of the Torah?" Because "there thy associates will establish thee in possession of it." Even if you are very sharp and acute, the Torah will not be established for you except through your colleagues when you discuss it with them. And this is why he concludes, "And lean not upon thine own understanding."

4:15

It is not in our power

This is like, "He was unable to answer,"⁴⁵ that is, we do not know why the way of the evil is prosperous nor why the righteous are afflicted with punishment.

Another explanation: We, in the period of the exile, have neither the rest and quiet that the Holy One Blessed Be He usually gives to the wicked in order to drive them out from the world to come, nor the special afflictions of love -- excluding neglect of the study of Torah -- which belong to the righteous; that is, we are not in the category of the wicked because we do not have rest that they have, nor have we reached the category of the righteous, because ours are not afflictions of love as are theirs.

Be beforehand in the salutation of peace to all men

Even to the idolators in the market.

Be rather a tail to lions

To those greater than you.

4:16

An ante-chamber

An entrance hall. The Aramaic of "the porch" is the "entrance hall."⁴⁶

Hall

The king's abode. Thus prepare yourself in this world so that you

merit the world to come.

4:17

Better is one hour of repentance

Needed for repentance and good deeds.

Than the whole life of the world to come

For at that time neither repentance nor good deeds are beneficial to man, for the world to come is only for receiving the reward for that which one has accomplished in this world.

4:18

Do not appease thy fellow in the hour of his anger

As it is written, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest."⁴⁷ The Holy One Blessed Be He said to Moses: "Wait until My countenance of wrath shall have passed away (and then I shall give thee rest)."⁴⁸

And comfort him not in the hour when his dead lies before him

For at the time of the destruction (of the Temple), The Holy One Blessed Be He, as if it were possible, mourned. The ministering angels sought to comfort Him and Holy Spirit answered them, "Strain not to comfort Me..."⁴⁹⁵⁰

And question him not in the hour of his vow

To find legal excuses for permitting him (to retract) his vow. For at that time for each excuse you find for him, he will say, "I vowed on this understanding,"⁵¹ and you will no longer find an excuse for him. And we find that when the Holy One Blessed Be He vowed to Moses that he would not enter Israel, Moses did not implore Him immediately but waited and afterwards began to implore.⁵²

In the hour of his disgrace

When one is disgraced by sin, because he is ashamed to face people. And so you find that when Adam sinned, The Holy One Blessed Be He did not reveal Himself to them till they had made girdles, as it is written, "...And they made themselves girdles..." followed by, "And they heard the voice of the Lord God..."⁵³

4:19

Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth

This statement is in the Book of Proverbs,⁵⁴ but Samuel the Younger was accustomed to warn men about this quality

Lest the Lord see it and it displease Him

When you have done this in your heart, it is as though this is your agent to carry out your desire.

And He turn away His wrath from him (unto thee)

Since it is not written, "and it turns," but "And He turn,"⁵⁵ its meaning is that He turns it (anger) from upon your enemies and turns it upon you.

4:20

On clean paper

Which lasts. Thus the learning of childhood is not forgotten.

Unripe grapes

That have not yet fully ripened and that blunt the teeth. Likewise a youth's wisdom has not been fully settled, and his words are neither received nor reflected by (other people's) minds.

Wine from the vat

Whose sediments are intermixed in it. Thus the youth's wisdom

has a mixture of doubts in it.

Rabbi says, "Look not at the flask"

Rabbi had a different opinion than that of Yose, in the name of Judah, and said that just as there can be a new vat full of old wine, so there may be a youth whose sense is equal to that of elders. And there are some elders who are on a lower level of wisdom than youths are.

4:21

Desire

One who seeks to satiate his desire by means of eating, drinking, copulation, and similar things.

Ambition

That men should honor him.

4:22

They that are born are destined to die

Anyone who is born is already destined to die.

And the dead

Are destined to relive and stand (in judgment) on the Day of Judgment, some gaining eternal life and some gaining eternal shame and horror.

And the living to be judged

Stand to be judged on the Day of Judgment.

To know

From others.

To make known

To others.

And to be made conscious

To understand by oneself.

He is the Maker

That the whole world is in His hand as clay is in the hand of the potter. And what is the meaning (of this)? Since "He is the Creator" who created the entire world ex nihilo, He can therefore do as He wishes with it.

He is the Discerner, He is the Judge

After He discerns all men's acts, He brings them (men) in judgment before Him.

He is the Complainant

For he summons the sinners.

He it is that will in future judge

In the world to come.

Nor respect of persons, nor taking of bribes

For He does not show favor even to the most righteous man, by not punishing him for his minor transgression.

And He does not take a good deed as a bribe for a transgression, but He gives reward for the good deed and punishment for the transgression. Thus explained Rambam.

Know also that everything is according to the reckoning

One coin and (then) another add up to a large amount. Likewise minor transgressions when they are multiplied come to a large amount.

And perforce thou wast formed

For the soul does not want to leave "the curtain of Heaven,"⁵⁶ a pure place where the souls rest, in order to enter the woman's womb,

into an unclean place; and so an angel comes and removes it against its will and places it the woman's womb.

And perforce thou wast born

At the time of birth, it (the baby) does not want leave (the womb) and an angel comes and removes it against its will.

And thou livest perforce

Man is burdened by afflictions and wishes to die, but cannot.

CHAPTER V

5:1

With ten sayings

Nine "And He said's"¹ and "In the beginning..."² which is also a saying, as it is written, "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made..."³⁴

Who destroy the world

If any man has caused a single soul to perish from Israel, it is as though he had caused a whole world to perish,⁵ and the wicked who cause their souls to perish through their iniquities are as though they have caused the whole world to perish, -- thus I found. But it seems to me that they are actually destroying the world in that they weight the entire world toward guilt, and as a result the world is destroyed because of them.

That was created with ten sayings

For one who destroys work done in one day cannot be compared to (one who destroys) work done in many days.

5:2

To make known the patience of God

You, too, do not be surprised that He has prolonged the evil kingdoms who enslave His people all these years, for He was even more patient with the generations from Adam to Noah, but afterward they were drowned.

And received the reward they should all have earned

He performed good deeds corresponding to the amount fitting for all of them to have performed; therefore, all of them were saved by means of his merit. And just as he took upon himself the responsibility for per-

forming the good deeds corresponding to all of theirs in this world, so in the world-to-come, he received the reward corresponding to theirs.

"For everyone has two portions, one in the Garden of Eden, and one in Gehinnom. (The righteous man) having been declared innocent, takes his own portion and his fellow's portion in the Gan Eden. (The evil man) having been declared guilty, takes his own portion and his fellow's portion in Gehinnom."⁶

5:3

Ten Trials

1. Ur of Chaldees, when Nirrod threw him to the furnace of fire.⁷
2. "Get thee out of thy country..."⁸
3. "And there was a famine..."⁹
4. "...And the woman was taken into Pharoah's house."¹⁰
5. The war of the kings.¹¹
6. The confrontation of the covenant between the pieces when God showed him the kingdoms' enslavements (of Israel).¹²
7. The circumcision.¹³
8. "...And Abimelech ...sent, and took Sarah."¹⁴
9. "...Cast out this bondwoman and her son..."¹⁵
10. The attempted offering of Isaac.¹⁶

Ten miracles were wrought for our fathers in Egypt

In that they were saved from the ten plagues, for all of them befell Egypt and not Israel.

And ten at the (Red) Sea

1. "...And the waters were divided."¹⁷
2. That the sea was made into a type of tent, into which Israel entered, as it is written, "Thou hast stricken through with

his rods the head of his rulers."¹⁸

3. That the bottom of the sea became dry without mud or slime, as it is written, "But the children of Israel walked upon dry land..."¹⁹
4. That the bottom of the sea upon which the Egyptians who were pursuing Israel tread upon, became damp and was made into mud and slime, as it is written, "The foaming of mighty waters."²⁰
5. That the water that was congealed at the bottom of the sea was not one piece but small pieces like bricks and building stones arranged next to each other, as it is written, "Thou didst break the sea in pieces by Thy strength..."²¹ in that it was broken into pieces.
6. That the congealed water solidified and became as hard as rocks, as it is written, "Thou didst shatter the heads of the sea monsters..."²² for the Egyptians are surnamed "sea monsters."
7. That the sea was separated into twelve segments so that each tribe might pass through its own single path. And thus it is written, "To Him who divided the (Red) Sea in sunder..."²³
8. That the water congealed like sapphire, onyx, and glass, so that the tribes might see one another when the pillar of fire gave light to them. And this is what is said, "Darkness of water, thick clouds of the skies,"²⁴ that is, the gathering of the water which was like thick clouds in the skies, (became) clear like the sky itself.
9. That there came forth from it (the sea) fresh water, for this what is said, "The floods....."²⁵

10. That after they drank whatever they wanted from it, the remainder congealed and became heaps, as it is written, "...The waters were piled up, the floods stood upright as a heap..."²⁶

Ten plagues did the Holy One Blessed Be He bring upon the Egyptians in Egypt

D-z-kh, 'A-d-sh, B-Alh-v.²⁷

And ten at the sea

Which correspond to the ten falls that are in the song of, "Thus the Lord saved..."²⁸

1. "...Hath He cast in the sea..."²⁹
2. "...Hath He cast into the sea..."³⁰
3. "...Are sunk in the Red Sea"³¹
4. "The deeps cover them ----."³²
5. "They went down in the depths..."³³
6. "...Dasheth in pieces the enemy."³⁴
7. "...Thou overthrowest them that rise up against thee..."³⁵
8. "...It consumeth them as stubble."³⁶
9. "...The sea covered them."³⁷
10. "They sank as lead."³⁸

Thus there are ten falls. But, "The earth swallowed them"³⁹ is not included in the count of the falls because this was their favor (namely) that they merited burial.

With ten trials did our fathers try the Holy One Blessed Be He, in the wilderness

Two at the sea: one at the going down (to the sea) where it is said,

"Because there were no graves in Egypt,"⁴⁰ and one at the going up (from the sea).⁴¹ (Two with water): "And when they came to Marah..... the people murmured..."⁴² and once in Rephidim, "Wherefore the people strove with Moses..."⁴³ Two with the manna: "...Let no man go out..." "...there went out some..."⁴⁴ (Also), "...Let no man leave of it..... but some of them left of it..."⁴⁵ Two with the cooked meat: the first, "...When we sat by the flesh-pots..."⁴⁶ and the second episode of cooked meat, "And the mixed multitude that was among them..."⁴⁷ One with the golden calf,⁴⁸ and one with the complainers and spies which was the tenth. There it is written, "Yet you have put me to the proof these ten times and have not hearkened to My voice..."⁴⁹

5:5

No unclean accident ever befell the High Priest on the Day of Atonement

Because this was a defilement that discharged from his body, it was more shameful and uglier than the other defilements.

The rain never quenched the fire of the wood-pile on the altar

Even though the altar was in an exposed place.

Neither did the wind overcome the column of smoke that arose therefrom

So that it would not rise straight up and ascend.

Nor was there ever found any disqualifying defect in the omer, or in the two loaves (on Pentecost) or in the shewbread

For if any disqualifying defect were found in them prior to their being fulfilled as a precept, it would have been impossible to sacrifice others in place of them; because "the omer" was cut at night and not very much was cut, and because "the two loaves (on Pentecost)" were

baked before the eve of the holiday and their baking does not take precedence of the holiday,⁵⁰ and likewise "the shewbread" was baked before the eve of Sabbath.

Closely pressed together

This is an expression of "floating on water."⁵¹ Because of the largeness of the crowd each man was pressed against his neighbor until their feet were lifted up from the ground and they were standing in the air.

They found ample space to prostrate themselves

At the time of prostration a miracle was performed for them, whereupon they prostrated themselves with ample space, each man a distance of four cubits from his neighbor so that one could not hear his neighbor when he confessed and made mention of his sins.

The place is too narrow for me to lodge overnight in Jerusalem⁵²

Read it thusly! Because the All-Present provided them with their livelihood, not one of them had to leave there and say, "My livelihood is limited and I cannot dwell in Jerusalem." And there are books that have written in them, "When I shall lodge overnight," which is said in regard to those who made the festival pilgrimage. For there was not one among them who was crowded when he lodged overnight in Jerusalem due to the overcrowded condition of the place. (This is) like, "The place is too strait for me; Give place to me that I may dwell."⁵³

5:6

In the twilight

On the eve of the first Sabbath before Creation was completed.

The mouth of the earth

To swallow up Korah.⁵⁴

The mouth of the well

The well of Miriam that used to travel with Israel in the deserts on all journeys.⁵⁵ And some say that Israel opened its mouth and recited a song, as it is said, "Spring up, O Well, -- sing ye unto it ..."⁵⁶

The mouth of the ass

A decree was placed upon the twilight that it should speak with Balaam.⁵⁷

The rainbow

As a covenantal sign that there would never again be a flood.⁵⁸

The manna

That it should descend to Israel for forty years in the desert.

The rod

Which was made of sapphire and by which the signs were performed.⁵⁹

The Shamir

A type of worm about the size of a barley corn. When it was passed over stones traced with ink, they (the letters) would be graven by themselves. And they engraved the Ephod and breastplate with it, as it is written about it, "...In their settings..."⁶⁰⁶¹

The writing on the tables

The form of the letters that were engraved on the tablets.

And the instrument of writing⁶²

(The letters) that were readable from all four sides.⁶³

And the tables of stone

Which were made of sapphire and whose length was six and whose width was six and whose thickness was three; just like one stone whose length, width, and thickness were equal and which was divided into two parts that were rolled up and hewn out of the sphere of the sun.⁶⁴

The destroying spirits also:

These are the demons. For after the Holy One Blessed Be He created Adam and Eve, He occupied himself with their (the demons) creation. And after He created their spirits, He did not have sufficient time before the day ended to create their bodies. So they remained spirits without bodies.⁶⁵

And the ram of Abraham, our father

A decree was placed upon it at twilight, that it should be caught by its horns in the thicket at the time of the attempted sacrifice of Isaac.⁶⁶

Tongs also made with tongs

The Targum is "tongs."⁶⁷ Tongs are made only by other tongs; but who made the first pair? (You must admit) against your will that they were made in Heaven and were created at twilight. And this is rejected in the chapter in the Talmud in chapter: **תנא דרבי חנינא** where they said, "It is possible that the first tongs were made in a form; they melted the copper in fire and poured it into the form and the tongs came to be instantly."⁶⁸

5:7

Of an uncultured man

This is an expression of "unfinished metal vessels"⁶⁹ whose manufacturing process was not completed. Likewise a man whose knowledge is incomplete either in ethics or in wisdom is called an "Unfinished thing."

Does not speak before him who is greater than he in wisdom

For thus we find about Eleazar and Ithamar who did not want to speak before their father (Aaron) when Moses was angry with them, but Aaron answered.⁷⁰

And does not break in upon the speech of his fellow

So that he will not confuse him, as it is written, "...Hear now my words..."⁷¹ -- (meaning) Wait until I have spoken. (If this applies to God), how much the more so to the average man.⁷²

He is not hasty to answer

So that his answer will be proper. And thus it states concerning Elihu, "...Suffer me a little and I will tell thee..."⁷³

He questions according to the subject matter, and answers to the point

Here this is counted as one "mark." And thus is its explanation: When the student questions "according to the subject matter," that is, about the same subject as they are occupied with, the teacher then answers "to the point." But should the student ask something not "according to the subject matter," he then makes the teacher answer not to the point. (This is) similar to what Rabbi Hiyya said to Rab, "When Rabbi is occupied with one tractate, do not ask him a question relating to another tractate."⁷⁴ And so you find with the men who were defiled by a dead man, that when they saw Moses occupied

with the laws of Passover, they asked him about that very subject matter.⁷⁵

He speaks upon the first thing first

And so we find concerning the Holy One Blessed Be He to whom Moses said, "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh?"⁷⁶ -- which is the first (question); and "...That I should bring forth the Children of Israel?"⁷⁷ -- which is the second. And the Holy One Blessed Be He gave him an answer on the first (question), "...Certainly I will be with thee..."⁷⁸ and on the second, "...When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God..."⁷⁹

Regarding that which he has not understood, he says: I do not understand it

If one has rendered a legal decision through his own logical deductions, he should not say, "thus I learned from my teachers." And we found concerning the men of Haran, that when Jacob asked them, "Is it well with him?", that they said to him, "It is well, and behold, Rachel, his daughter, cometh with the sheep,"⁸⁰ that is, "This we know, but if you want to ask more, behold, Rachel, his daughter, cometh with the sheep, and she will tell you, for we do not know more than this."⁸¹

And he acknowledges the truth

Even though he is able to substantiate his words with legal claims that he possesses. And so we find that when Aaron had dismissed Moses and said to him, "If you heard (a lenient ruling) concerning temporary holy matters, then you cannot be lenient concerning permanent holy matters," "...When Moses heard that, it was well-pleasing in his sight,"⁸² he confessed and was not ashamed to say, "I did not

understand," instead of, "I understood, but forgot."⁸³

The reverse of all this is to be found in an uncultured man

The reverse of these marks which are found in the wise man is found in "an uncultured man."

5:8

A dearth ensues from draught

The rains diminish and as a result of this grain is more precious.

A dearth ensues from tumult

Because of invading troops, people cannot gather the produce.

An exterminating dearth

The sky is like iron and the earth like brass.⁸⁴

The execution of which, however, is not within the function of a human tribunal

About which no Rabbinical law was made.

And for the violation of the law regarding the fruits of the seventh year

For people do business with them and do not accord them the sanctity of the seventh year.

For the delay of justice

Of finding the guilty innocent and indicting the innocent.

And on account of the offense of those who interpret the Torah not according to its true sense

By forbidding the permitted thing and by permitting the forbidden thing.

5:9

Perjury

(An oath) in vain which is not needed.

Profanation of the Divine Name

One who defiantly commits a sin in public. Or it may also mean that people look and learn from his actions.

And the neglect of the year of rest for the soil

For they plow and seed during the Sabbatical Year.

For the default of giving the tithe to the poor in the third year

During the third and sixth years the "Poor man's tithe"⁸⁵ is set aside for the year of rest for the soil, instead of the "Second tithe"⁸⁶ which is set aside during the other years.

For robbing the poor of the grants legally assigned to them

The gleanings, sheaves forgotten in the field, the corners of the field, the fallen fruit, and the gleaning reserved for the poor.⁸⁷

5:10

What is mine is mine, and what is thine is thine

I do not want to derive benefit from you and, oh that you will not derive benefit from me.

Some say, this is a character like that of Sodom

This matter comes close to a character like that of Sodom. For if one holds this principle, he does not want to let his neighbor derive benefit from something (of his) which his neighbor can use, and from which he suffers no loss. And such was the character of Sodom that they intended to refuse visitors among themselves, even though the land was spacious and they were not lacking anything.

He who says, "What is mine is thine, and what is thine is mine"

One who derives and renders benefit equally. This is the ordinary

way of life, but such a person does not know Scripture, as it is written, "...But he that hateth gifts shall live."⁸⁸ And this (the Mishnah says) is the language of the boor which is said everywhere by one who wants world improvement but does not have the wisdom to distinguish between worthy improvements.

What is mine is thine, and what is thine is thine

One who renders benefit to others from his possessions but who does not derive benefit from others.

Is a saint

One who performs beyond the letter of the Law.

5:11

Thus we read: He whom it is easy to provoke and easy to pacify, his gain disappears in his loss; he whom it is hard to provoke and hard to pacify, his loss disappears in his gain

A man who angers quickly over any matter, although he repents and is appeased quickly, his loss is greater than his gain because most of his actions are spoiled in as much as he is easily angered over every matter. But he whom it is hard to provoke, even though he has the bad character trait of being hard to pacify, his loss -- that he is hard to pacify -- comes out less than his reward -- that he is hard to provoke -- which is greater and most of his actions are proper. And there are some who read this the opposite way. But this version seems correct to me.

5:12

He who quickly understands and quickly forgets, his gain disappears in his loss

Since one forgets what one learns, what benefit is there in that one is quick to understand? The result is that his loss is greater than his gain.

He who understands with difficulty, and forgets with difficulty, his loss disappears in his gain

For the good characteristic that he possesses is better than the defective characteristic, since he remembers and does not forget what he has understood after difficulty. And we deduce from this that if we have before us two students and have only enough food for one of them, we give precedence to he "who forgets with difficulty" over "he who quickly understands."

His is an evil portion

It was not proper to teach here about the pious or the wicked for this (i. e., deficiencies pointed out in our Mishnah) is something not dependent upon man's choice, but is a deficiency that one has from the very beginning of his creation.

5:13

As to almsgiving - there are four dispositions

That is, in the act of almsgiving and not in the almsgivers themselves, for there is included among them (almsgivers) someone who does not give. And similarly in the following (Mishnah) concerning those who attend the house of study, it refers to the attendance at the house of study.

His eye is evil toward what appertains to others

For he knows that almsgiving makes one rich and he does not want others to become rich.

Another explanation: (Sometimes) there is someone who watches over his relatives' money more than his own. So even though he donates, he does not want his relatives to donate in order that they not lose their money. And this (explanation of) "His eye is evil to what appertains to others" is like that of "His eye is evil against what is his own" which is at the end (part of the Mishnah).

5:14

He who goes and does not practice

This is one who goes to the house of study to learn and who does not review (his learning), so that he learns but does not understand.

He who practices, but does not go

This is one who learns and reviews in the house of study that is in his own home.

5:15

Among those that sit before the wise

That which was before concerning the "four qualities in disciples"⁸⁹ was in reference to remembering and forgetting, but this now is in reference to correct logical thinking and to separation of correct from incorrect information.

A sponge

Which absorbs water whether it be muddy or clear. So there is one whose mind is broad and who lets in everything that he learns and who doesn't have the capacity to separate truth from falsity.

A funnel

A utensil that one places on the lid of a barrel or leather bottle when one wants to fill it with wine or oil.

Which lets in at one end and out at the other

So there is one who lets in everything that he learns and as soon as he swallows it, so soon does he vomit it out.

A strainer

One who lets out all that he learns in the house of study, but retains useless information.

A sieve

After the bran and grit have been filtered out from the ground flour there remains fine flour together with the coarse fine flour which is the important ingredient. Then one filters this through a very fine sieve through which all that fine flour which is like white grains of dust, drops down; so that the important coarse fine flour remains. In this manner the meal-offerings were made. Thus there is one who has the capacity to separate and cleanse learning and who retains the truth from amidst the falsity and the vanity.

5:16

Whenever love depends upon some material cause

For it does not last. When the thing that was the cause for that love passes away the love also passes away. But all love that is not dependent upon a material cause but rather upon a lasting cause -- like the love of the righteous and the sages -- never perishes because the thing which is the cause for this love does not pass away; thus love does not pass away.

The love of Amnon and Tamar⁹⁰

Because of her beauty.

The love of David and Jonathan⁹¹

To fulfill the will of their Maker. For Jonathan said to David,

"...And thou shalt be king over Israel and I shall be next unto thee..."⁹²

5:17

Every controversy that is in the name of Heaven, shall in the end lead to a permanent result.

That is, the men of this controversy endure and do not perish, as was the case of "the controversy of Hillel and Shammai" where neither the students of the School of Shammai nor the students of the School of Hillel perished. (But in contradiction) "Korah and his company" did perish.

And I heard the explanation of "...Shall in the end lead..." (as meaning) "its aim, and the objective of its activity." As for controversy that in the name of Heaven, the aim and objective of this controversy is to attain truth which endures, as it is written, "From out of the debate the truth is clarified,"⁹³ as it was clarified with the controversies of Hillel and Shammai that the law is according to the School of Hillel. But as for controversy that is not in the name of Heaven, the aim sought through this is the quest for dominance and love of dialectics. But this objective does not endure, as we find with "the controversy of Korah and his company," the aim and objective of their intentions being quest for honor and power.

5:18

Through him no sin shall be brought about

So that he will not be in Hell, and his disciples in Heaven.⁹⁴

Shall not have the means to repent

So that he will not be in Heaven, and his disciples in Hell.⁹⁵

And made many righteous

For he taught the Torah to all Israel.

"He executed the righteousness of the Lord, and His ordinances with Israel"⁹⁶

And His ordinances that were (done together) with Israel; (it was) as if he had made them perform them.

"...Which he sinned, and wherewith he made Israel sin..."⁹⁷

Since it does not say, "For the sin of Jeroboam and Israel," we learn from this that everything was dependent upon Jeroboam.

5:19

Is of the disciples of Abraham, our father

Learning from him and following in his ways.

A good eye

One who is satisfied with what he has and who does not desire others' money. For thus we find that Abraham said to the king of Sodom,

"...I will not take a thread nor a shoe-latchet nor aught that is thine..."⁹⁸

A humble mind

Extraordinary humbleness. And thus we find Abraham saying, "...And who am I but dust and ashes?"⁹⁹

And a lowly spirit

(Meaning) caution and abstinence from lusts. And we find this about Abraham, as it is written, "...Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon,"¹⁰⁰ for until that time he did not recognize this about her because of his great decency.¹⁰¹ And concerning Balaam we find

"An evil eye" because he knew that it was evil in the sight of God for him to go near Balaak, but still he did go in order to get a reward, for it is written, "...If Balaak would give me his house full

of silver and gold..."¹⁰²

A haughty mind

For he said, "The saying of him who heareth the words of God and knowest the knowledge of the Most High."¹⁰³

And a proud spirit

For if he had not had great lust, he would not have advised declaring the daughters of Moab free for harlotry.¹⁰⁴ And the sages said, "Balaam committed bestiality with his ass."¹⁰⁵

That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance

Abraham was called "a friend,"¹⁰⁶ as it is written, "...The seed of Abraham My friend..."¹⁰⁷

Substance

(Refers) to this world.

And that I may fill their treasuries

(Referring) to the world to come.

Men of blood

Balaam was called a man of blood because he felled twenty-four thousand Israelites with his counsel.¹⁰⁸

5:20

Be as strong as a leopard

This leopard is born from (the union of) boar and lioness. For when the lions get sexually excited, the lioness sticks her head in the forest thickets and roars for and demands the male, but the boar hears her roar and mates with her. So a leopard results from the two of them, and because it is a bastard, it is arrogant even though it does not have too much strength. Likewise you, too, be arrogant and be

not ashamed to ask your teacher about what you did not understand,
just as we learned, "Nor can the diffident learn."¹⁰⁹

And light as an eagle

To review your learning and not be tired, as it is written, "They
shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary..."¹¹⁰

Fleet as a hart

To pursue the precepts.

And strong as a lion

To subdue your evil inclination toward sin.

The bold-faced

Because arrogance is recognizable on one's face, as it is written,
"A wicked man hardeneth his face..."¹¹¹; therefore he (evil man) is
called "bold-faced."

That Thy city be speedily rebuilt in our days

That is, "Just as you were gracious to us (to give us) this way,
that is a sign to the seed of Abraham, (to be) modest, merciful, and
performers of acts of loving-kindness,"¹¹² so may it be Thy will
"...that Thy city be speedily rebuilt,...etc."

5:21

At five years the age is reached for the study of the Scripture

One teaches (it) from the forbidden year¹¹³ (on), as it is written,
"...Three years shall it be as forbidden unto you....and in the fourth
year, all the fruit thereof shall be held, for giving praise..."¹¹⁴
(meaning) that one's father should teach ~~one~~ the form of the letters and
recognition of the pointing. "But in the fifth year may ye eat of the
fruit thereof, that it may yield unto you more richly the increase

thereof..."¹¹⁵ (meaning) that from then on "...stuff them with Torah, like an ox."¹¹⁶

At ten for the study of the Mishnah

For one learns Scripture for five years and Mishnah for five years, and Talmud for five years. Hence the dictum: If a student does not see progress in his studies after five years, he never will, as it is written, "This is that which pertains unto the Levites: From twenty and five years old and upward they shall go in to perform the service..."¹¹⁷ (meaning) that one comes and learns the laws of the service for five years (for) "...from thirty years old..."¹¹⁸ one performs the service.¹¹⁹

At thirteen for the fulfillment of the commandments

As it is written, "When a 'man' or woman shall commit any sin that men commit..."¹²⁰ Moreover concerning Shechem it is written, "...That two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brethren, took each 'man' his sword..."¹²¹; and Levi in this chapter was but thirteen years of age,¹²² but yet was called a "man."

At eighteen for marriage

The word "man" is written nineteen times in the section of Genesis beginning with, "And God said: let us make 'man'..."¹²³ until "And the rib....made He..."¹²⁴ once for the subject itself so that eighteen are left for interpretation.

At twenty for seeking a livelihood¹²⁵

After one's sustenance. After one has studied Scripture, Mishnah, and Talmud, and has married and borne children, one must go around

and seek livelihood.

Another explanation: At twenty Heaven pursues him and punishes him for his deeds, for the Court on High does not punish anyone less than twenty years of age.¹²⁶

At thirty for entering into one's full strength

For the Levites used to set up the Tabernacle and load and unload the wagons and carry (the utensils) on their shoulder, "...from thirty years old and upward."¹²⁷

At forty for understanding

For after the forty years that Israel was in the desert, Moses said to them, "...But the Lord hath not given you a heart to know, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day."^{128 129}

At fifty for counsel

As it is written concerning the Levites, "...And from the age of fifty years they shall return from the service of the work, and shall serve no more; but shall minister with their brethren..."¹³⁰ And what is this ministry? That he give them counsel!

At sixty a man attains old age

As it is written, "Thou shalt come to thy grave in a ripe old age..."¹³¹
"In thy ripe old age" equals the number sixty¹³² in Geomatria.¹³³

At seventy, the hoary head

As it is written about David, "and he died in a good old age..."¹³⁴
For the days of his life were seventy years.¹³⁵

At eighty, the gift of special strength

As it is written, "...Or even by reason of strength, four score years..."¹³⁶

At ninety, to sink down

One walks bowed down and bent. And some say this is an expression of
 "...a deep pit."¹³⁷

5:22

Turn it (the Torah) and turn it over again

The Torah.

For everything is in it

For you will find everything in it.

And wax grey and old over it

Do not forsake it till (your) old age.

And stir not from it

That you not say, "I learned Israel's wisdom, (now) I shall go and seek Greek wisdom, for it is permitted to learn Greek wisdom only in a place where it is forbidden to meditate on words of Torah, i. e. -- in the bath-house or in the privy. When they asked Rabbi Joshua, can a man teach his son Greek (wisdom)? He said to them, "Teach him at a time that is neither day nor night, for it is written, "...But thou shalt meditate thereon day and night."¹³⁸¹³⁹

5:23

According to the labor is the reward

Corresponding to the amount of anguish that you bear in the study of Torah and in performing the precepts, so will your reward be increased.

THE TRACTATE OF ABOTH IS COMPLETED

INTRODUCTION

Footnotes

1. Louis Ginsberg, "Bertinoro, Obadiah (Yareh) B. Abraham," The Jewish Encyclopedia, ed. Isidor Singer, (New York and London: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1910), III, pp. 108-109.
2. Meyer Waxman, A History of Jewish Literature (6 volumes: New York and London: Thomas Yoseloff, 1960), II, pp. 113-114.

CHAPTER I

Footnotes

1. A collection of Oral Laws, edited by Rabbi Judah han-Nasi.
2. A sage of the Mishnah whose teachings are contained in the Mishnah and in the Baraytha, living sometime between 10 and 220 C. E.
3. Judges 2:7. All translations are taken from the Jewish Publication Society translation of The Holy Scriptures - 1917, Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia.
4. I Samuel 1:9.
5. I Samuel 1.
6. Yerushalmi Berakhoth 2:4d. (Krotashin: David Baer Manasheh, 1860).
7. Ezra 2:2.
8. Haggai 1:1.
9. Zechariah 1:1.
10. Malachi 1:1.
11. Nehemiah 1:1.
12. Yoma 69b. All translations are taken from The Babylonian Talmud, ed. Rabbi Dr. I. Epstein (6 vols.: London: The Sonchino Press, 1948).
13. Deuteronomy 10:17.
14. Jeremiah spoke, "...the great, the mighty God..." (Jer. 32:18), saying "the mighty" because God observed the destruction of the Temple and was silent. He omitted "awful" because this refers only to the Temple, as it says, "Awful is God out of thy holy place..." (Ps. 68:36) and the Temple had already been destroyed in his days. Daniel described God as "...great and awful..." (Dan. 9:4) saying "the awful acts he did with us in the fiery furnace," but not as "mighty," saying, "...His children are in chains, and where then is His might?"
15. Nehemiah 9:32. See also the beginning of the Amidah prayer.
16. That God suppresses His wrath, and that he extends long-suffering to the wicked.

17. Yoma 69b; Yerushalmi Berakhoth 7:11c; Yerushalmi Megillah 3:74c.
18. Berakhoth 28a.
19. i. e., 'the morning of life,' youth.
20. i. e., 'old age.'
21. Ecclesiastes 11:6.
22. Yevamoth 62b.
23. Intermarriage forbidden by rabbinical enactment.
24. An occupation, on Sabbath or festivals, forbidden by the rabbis as being out of harmony with the celebration of the day.
25. Leviticus 18:30.
26. Yevamoth 21a.
27. Maimonides, Rabbi Moses. Mishnah Torah (8 vols.; Jerusalem: El Ham-m'koros, 1954). Introduction.
28. Jeremiah 33:25. i. e., If not for My Torah which is to be studied by day and by night, heaven and earth would not enjoy permanence.
29. Pesahim 68b.
30. A division of popular representatives deputed to accompany the daily service in the Temple with prayers and also a corresponding division the rural towns, answering to the divisions of priests and Levites.
31. Ta'anith 27b.
32. Genesis Rabbah 35:2. All translations are taken from Midrash Rabbah, ed. Rabbi Dr. H. Freedman and Maurice Simon. (10 vols.; London and Bournemouth: The Sonchino Press, 1951).
33. Psalms 89:3; Read as, "...The world is built by mercy..."
34. The Targum is the Aramaic of The Holy Scriptures.
35. Leviticus 27.
36. Yerushalmi Berakhoth 9, 14b.
37. The two chiefs (Nasi and Ab Beth Din) of the Supreme Court, since its reorganization after Simon the Just.
38. The chief of the Great Sanhedrin in Jerusalem.

39. The President of the Great Sanhedrin - next in dignity to the Nasi.
40. Deuteronomy Rabbah 4:5.
41. Bava Mezhiah 84b.
42. מ"ה ד"ה, (Venice, 1624), נ"א.
43. Genesis 9:25.
44. The word "woman" has a definite article with it.
45. The word "woman" without the definite article.
46. Not in the menstrual state.
47. Amos 4:13.
48. Hagigah 5b.
49. Rabbi Judah the Prince.
50. Numbers 8:11.
51. Genesis Rabbah 18:4.
52. i. e., Maimonides.
53. Avodah Zarah 19a and 19b.
54. Shabbath 97a.
55. Nega'im 12:6.
56. The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan, trans. Judah Goldin ("Yale Judaica Series," Vol. V; New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1955, chapter XXX. All further quotations from this book will be abbreviated ARN).
57. Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer, (Warsaw: Rabbi Pesach Levensohn, 1878).
58. Proverbs 6:15.
59. Gittin 9b, 10b.
60. No source. It may also be that originally ב"ה ד"ה may have been only ב"ה, which originally stood for ב"ה ד"ה, and was later printed incorrectly as we have it now.
61. Gittin 57a; Sanhedrin 96b.
62. Literally, "Father of the Court."

63. ~~אב~~ Father; אביו minors. The Beth Din had jurisdiction over orphans.
64. Megillah 5b.
65. Yevamoth 114b.
66. Kethuvoth 59b.
67. Pesahim 113a.
68. I Samuel 21 and 22.
69. ARN - chapter V.
70. ARN - chapter XII.
71. Malachi 2:6.
72. Read as, "...a name spread afar..."
73. Exodus 12:21.
74. Nifal of " קָוַם ," meaning "to gather."
75. Pesahim 49b.
76. Megillah 28b.
77. The אָרַם חַוָּה .
78. Sanhedrin 10:1.
79. Ezra 7:10.
80. Genesis 18:5.
81. Genesis 18:7.
82. Jeremiah 9:22.
83. Avoth 4:1.
84. Sanhedrin 7b.
85. Gittin 36b.
86. Genesis 3:3.
87. Genesis Rabbah 19:3.
88. Proverbs 30:6.

89. Avoth 1:12.

90. Leviticus 19:11.

CHAPTER II

Footnotes

1. **שִׁבּוּר** instead of **יָבוּר** .
2. The "golden mean" of Aristotle.
3. Sanhedrin 7:1.
4. Divine punishment through premature or sudden death.
5. Yerushalmi Nazir 4: 53a.
6. Shabbath 63a.
7. Ta'anith 11a.
8. Berakhoth 29a.
9. Ecclesiastes 10:20.
10. Leviticus Rabbah 32:2; Bava Bathra 4a.
11. Rabbi Solomon the Son of Isaac.
12. Genesis 47:19. **וַיָּבֹר** in Aramaic, showing **בִּיָּר** means empty.
13. Deuteronomy 30:13.
14. 'Eruvin 55a.
15. A court, composed of 71 members.
16. Sanhedrin 8a.
17. Berakhoth 18b; Shabbath 13b and 152a.
18. i. e., Distraction. Pakuda, Babya ben Joseph Ibn, Duties of the Heart (New York, Bloch Publishing Company, 1925 - 1941). Introduction.
19. Deuteronomy 30:20.
20. The standard reading today. The terms were reversed in the version that Bertinoro had.
21. Isaiah 32:17.
22. Referring to Rabbi Jochanan, the son of Zakkai; Sukkah 28a; Bava

Bathra 134a.

23. As a passive participle and not as a noun.
24. Yerushalmi Yevamoth 5a.
25. Avoth 2:5.
26. Avoth 2:1.
27. Psalms 58:6.
28. Avoth 2:9.
29. Bava Mezi'a.
30. That part of the prayers which must be read standing and is usually called **שמונה עשרה**.
31. The weekly Scripture lesson.
32. Joel 2:13.
33. Avoth 2:14.
34. Renunciation of ownership; ownerless.
35. Job 11:9.
36. Joshua 1:8.

CHAPTER III

Footnotes

1. Habakkuk 1:14.
2. Avodah Zarah 4b.
3. Malachi 3:16.
4. Lamentations 3:28; read as "...and meditates in silence..."
5. I Kings 19:12.
6. Lamentations 3:28.
7. i. e., ברכת המזון .
8. Psalms 106:28.
9. Isaiah 28:8.
10. Interpreted as, "...Thou shalt call it (namely, idol-worship) vomit..." It is read צִוָּה instead of זָא .
11. Interpreted as, "...without the All Present..."
12. Ezekiel 41:22.
13. Ibid.
14. Read as אָמַח instead of אָמַח .
15. Sanhedrin 4a.
16. Instead of the standard text, "When ten people sit and occupy themselves with Torah..."
17. Psalms 82:1.
18. Numbers 14:27.
19. Megillah 23b.
20. Psalms 82:1.
21. Sanhedrin 1:1.

22. Amos 9:6. Instead of the standard text, "And hath founded His vault upon the earth."
23. Exodus 12:22, where the same Hebrew word is used for "vault," and for "bunch."
24. Parah 11:9.
25. See Rambam's commentary.
26. The Divine Presence.
27. Five men.
28. Sanhedrin 1:1.
29. Lamentations 3:28. Interpreted as "...Because He shelters him..." instead of the standard text.
30. Exodus 40:3. "...Thou shalt cover..."
31. The blessing said when viewing beautiful trees or animals.
Daily Prayer Book, Joseph H. Hertz, ed. (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1954), p. 990.
32. Jeremiah 4:3.
33. This is the Aristotilian principle of "Entelechy."
הלוי, יהודה. ספר הכוזרי. עורך יצחק הסנגרי (ווילנה:
רבי יצחק פנק, 1904). מאמר ג:עב.
34. Shabbath 87b.
35. Ecclesiastes 2:3.
36. A sacrifice rejectable as a consequence of improper intentions in the mind of the officiating priest.
37. Portions of a sacrifice left over beyond the legal time and bound to be burnt.
38. The half-festive days intervening between the first and the last days of Passover and/or of Succoth.
39. Bava Mezia 58b.
40. Leviticus 18:21.
41. Megillah 4:9.

42. The Piel has the same meaning as the Hifil..
43. Exodus 26:5. Where **מקבילות** is used in the sense of "opposite: or next to."
44. The traditional Scriptural text without vowels.
45. Omission of the vowel letter.
46. A word written plene, with vowel letters.
47. Leviticus 23:42, 43.
48. Sukkah 6b.
49. Leviticus 22:31; 23:2, 4.
50. Rosh Hashonah 25a: **אִנּוּם** (them) is read **אַתָּם** (you) for homiletical purposes.
51. Deuteronomy 14:22.
52. Ta'anith 9a.
53. Joshua 1:8.
54. Proverbs 17:28.
55. Proverbs 4:2.
56. Genesis 1:4, 10, 18, 21, 25.
57. Deuteronomy 32:2.
58. Deuteronomy 30:15.
59. Sukkah 53a. Namely, "death."
60. Avoth 3:15.
61. Avodah Zarah 3a.
62. Interpreted as, "here there is no worldly occupation."
63. Deuteronomy 22:6.
64. Vide Kelim 1 - 3.
65. 'Arakhin 2:1.
66. Middah 29b.
67. Geomatria - the use of letters for their numerical values.

CHAPTER IV

Footnotes

1. Literally, "the son of Zoma."
2. Horayoth 2b.
3. Psalms 119:99, interpreted as, "From all my teachers I have gotten understanding, for thy testimonies (Torah) are my meditation."
4. Proverbs 16:32.
5. I Samuel 2:30.
6. A conclusion, a minori ad majori.
7. I Samuel 2:30.
8. Genesis 12:3.
9. Bezah 39a.
10. Rosh Hashana 18a.
11. Ibid.
12. Nedarim 62 a.
13. Ibid.
14. Nedarim 37a.
15. The division of words into clauses in accordance with the sense; referring to Scripture.
16. Nedarim 37a.
17. Deuteronomy 4:14.
18. Deuteronomy 4:5.
19. Nedarim 37a.
20. Leviticus 21:10.
21. Yoma 18a, Hullin 134b.
22. Omission of the vowel letter.

23. A word written plane, with vowel letters.
24. Menahoth 29b.
25. Vide Shevu'oth 20b.
26. Sanhedrin 5a.
27. Yerushalmi Sanhedrin, chapter I.
28. קט'גור is interpreted as קורא תיגור : Yerushalmi Berakoth 9c.
29. סניגור is interpreted as שונא תיגור .
30. Exodus 17:9.
31. Mekilta de Rabbi Ishmael, Jacob Z. Lauterbach, editor. (3 volumes; Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1935),
עמלק .
32. Numbers 12:11.
33. ARN - 27.
34. Numbers 11:28.
35. ARN - 27.
36. Leviticus 19:32.
37. ספרא . 7 קדושים .
ספרא דבי רב. (ווין : יעקב הכהן שלאסברג, 1862). דפוס
שניה : הוצאת אום, 1946.
38. Leviticus 21:8.
39. Deuteronomy 17:15.
40. Kethuvoth 17a.
41. Mo'ed Qatan 17a.
42. Yoma 71b.
43. Exodus 22:27.
44. Bava Bathra 4a.
45. Yevamoth 105a; Ta'anith 11b.

46. I Kings 7:7; Vide ק"ד"ר .
47. Exodus 33:14, interpreted as "After My presence (anger) will depart, then I shall give you rest."
48. Berakhoth 7a.
49. Isaiah 22:4.
50. Lamentations Rabbah: Proem, 24.
51. Nedarim 22b.
52. Deuteronomy Rabbah 2:5.
53. Genesis 3:7, 8; Interpreted as, "After...girdles, then they... the Lord God."
54. Proverbs 24:17, 18.
55. נשב which is קל is interpreted as "It (His) anger abates;" and והשיב which is הפעיל is interpreted as "He turns His anger."
56. Vide Hagigah 15a.

CHAPTER V

Footnotes

1. Genesis 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26, 29; 2:18.
2. Genesis 1:1.
3. Psalms, 33:6.
4. Rosh Hashana, 34a.
5. Sanhedrin 4:5.
6. Hagigah 15a.
7. Genesis Rabbah 28:13
8. Genesis 12:1.
9. Genesis 12:10.
10. Genesis 12:15.
11. Genesis 14.
12. Genesis 15.
13. Genesis 17:10 - 14, 23 - 27.
14. Genesis 20:1.
15. Genesis 21:10.
16. Genesis 22.
17. Exodus 14:21.
18. Habakkuk 3:15; read as, "Thou hast hollowed out tunnels..."
19. Exodus 14:29.
20. Habakkuk 3:4; Read as, "...The mud..."
21. Psalms 74:13.
22. Ibid.

23. Psalms 136:13; Read as, "To Him...sea in pieces...:"
24. Psalms 18:12. It appears as if II Samuel 22:12 would have been the correct citation.
25. Exodus 15:8. The same word (floods) is used in Canticles 4:15 with references to fresh water.
26. Exodus 15:8.
27. The initial letters of the Ten Plagues. See the Passover Haggadah and Minahoth 11:4 - Bertinoro.
28. Exodus 14:30.
29. Exodus 15:14.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.
32. Exodus 15:5.
33. Ibid.
34. Exodus 15:6.
35. Exodus 15:7.
36. Ibid.
37. Exodus 15:10.
38. Ibid.
39. Exodus 15:12.
40. Exodus 14:11.
41. Psalms 106:7.
42. Exodus 15:23, 24.
43. Exodus 17:2.
44. Exodus 16:19, 20.
45. Exodus 16:19, 20.
46. Exodus 16:3.
47. Numbers 11:4.

48. Exodus 32.
49. Numbers 14:22.
50. Causing suspension of the holiday law.
51. ספרי על ספר דברים. עורכים אריא פילקלשטיין וחיים שאול
האראוויטץ. (ברסלו, 1935-1939). 205.
52. Read as, "The All-Present has made it difficult for me to live in Jerusalem."
53. Isaiah 49:20.
54. Numbers 16:32.
55. Numbers Rabbah 1:2.
56. Numbers 21:17.
57. Numbers 22:28.
58. Genesis 9:11.
59. Exodus Rabbah 8:3.
60. Exodus 28:11; Exodus 28:20.
61. Sotah 48b.
62. Read as, "The writing..."
63. Yerushalmi Shekalim 49b.
64. Canticles Rabbah 5:14; 101 ספרי.
65. מדרש תנחומא. עורך שלמה באבער. (ווילנה, האלמנה והאחים
ראם, 1885). 1:12.
66. Genesis 22:13.
67. I Kings 7:49; the Aramaic of מלכים is צבתיא.
68. Pesahim 54a.
69. Kelim 12:6.
70. Leviticus 10:16, 19 - 20: Leviticus Rabbah, 13:1.

71. Numbers 12:6.
72. 103 ספרי .
73. Job 36:2.
74. Shabbath 3b.
75. 68 ספרי .
76. Exodus 3:11.
77. Ibid.
78. Exodus 3:12.
79. Ibid.
80. Genesis 29:6.
81. Genesis Rabbah 70:1.
82. Leviticus 10:20.
83. Zevahim 101a.
84. Leviticus 26:19.
85. Collected on the third and sixth years.
86. Collected on the first, second, fourth, and fifth years; to be consumed by the owner in Jerusalem.
87. Leviticus 19:9, 10.
88. Proverbs 15:27.
89. Avoth 5:12.
90. II Samuel 13.
91. I Samuel 18:1.
92. I Samuel 23:17.
93. The source of this quotation is unobtainable.
94. Yoma 86b.
95. Yoma 85 a.

96. Deuteronomy 33:21.
97. I Kings 15:30.
98. Genesis 14:23.
99. Genesis 18:27.
100. Genesis 12:11.
101. Bava Bathra 16a.
102. Numbers 22:18.
103. Numbers 24:16.
104. Sanhedrin 106a; Vide Numbers 24:14 and 3:16.
105. Sanhedrin 105a.
106. Friend (אהב) which is the same word as "those that love me."
107. Isaiah 41:8.
108. Vide, Numbers 31:16.
109. Avoth 2:6.
110. Isaiah 40:31.
111. Proverbs 21:29.
112. Yevamoth 79a.
113. The beginning of the fourth year of age.
114. Leviticus 19:23, 24.
115. Leviticus 19:25.
116. Bava Bathra 21a.
117. Numbers 8:24.
118. Numbers 4:3.
119. Hullin 24a.
120. Numbers 5:6.

121. Genesis 34:25.
122. Genesis Rabbah 80:10; A גזרה שונה of א"ש was made.
123. Genesis 1:26.
124. Genesis 2:22.
125. Read as, "At twenty for pursuing..."
126. Numbers Rabbah 18:4.
127. Numbers 4:30 - 32.
128. Deuteronomy 29:3.
129. Avodah Zarah 5b.
130. Numbers 8:25, 26.
131. Job 5:26.
132. בכלח is equal to sixty (60) in letter values.
133. Mo'ed Quatan 28a.
134. I Chronicles 29:28.
135. II Samuel 5:4.
136. Psalms 90:10.
137. Proverbs 22:14; a play on words שוחה and לשוחה
(to sink down).
138. Joshua 1:8.
139. Menahoth 99b.

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