

INTRODUCTION

אבות, **Avoth**,§ or פִּרְקֵי אֲבוֹת, **Pirke Avoth**,§ is the ninth מַסְכָּה (*Tractate* or *Treatise*) of סֵדֶר נִזְקֵין (the *Fourth Order Nezikin*) of the מִשְׁנָה (*Mishnah*).

The term אבות 'Fathers', is the plural form of the Biblical substantive אב, and פִּרְקֵי אֲבוֹת means 'Chapters of the Fathers'.

It contains a collection of ethical maxims or rules and principles of conduct and aphorisms or precise moral precepts and principles (ascribed to some sixty Sages who lived during the period 300 B.C.E. to 200 C.E.), all of which have their origin or parallel in Scripture.

The *Tractate* is aptly designated **The Ethics of the Fathers**, and also even more appropriately **Sayings of the Fathers**, in keeping with its contents that are so eminently ethical in character.

This *Tractate* is given only in the תַּלְמוּד בְּבִלְי, *Babylonian Talmud*, but without גְּמָרָא.

There is a very voluminous extension—an homiletical exposition—of this *Tractate* under the title of אֲבוֹת דֵּר' נָתָן, **The Sayings of R. Nathan**, which is incorporated in the *Appendix* of the fourth volume of the *Babylonian Talmud*.

The entire *Tractate* (together with an extra, sixth, Chapter, a בְּרִייתָא) is in comparatively simple attractive language, easily understood by the humblest Jewish reader, and is of such paramount practical interest and supremely moral importance that it has been incorporated in the *Liturgy* and is read on Sabbath afternoons during the summer months. The סְפָרִידִים have not followed this custom though in Spain the *Tractate* used to be read on Sabbath mornings. Among the אֲשֶׁכְּנִיּוֹת these Chapters used to be read—probably the oldest custom—by some on the six Sabbaths between פֶּסַח and שְׁבֻעוֹת, but the more general practice is to read these (one Chapter on each Sabbath*) on all the Sabbaths between פֶּסַח and ראש השנה.

The *Tractate* contains five Chapters, but in some *Mishnah* editions a sixth Chapter (which being a בְּרִייתָא, *Extraneous Mishnah*, forms no part of the *Mishnah*) is added, and, as already mentioned, is also included in the סִדְוּר (Daily Prayer Book). The title of this sixth Chapter is פֶּרֶק קַנְיָן הַתּוֹרָה, *The Chapter of the Acquisition of the Law*, or קַנְיָן הַתּוֹרָה, *The Acquisition of the Law*, and it is also termed בְּרִייתָא דֵּר' מֵאִיר, *The Boraita of R. Meir*.

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מִסְכָּה

אבות

TRACTATE
AVOTH

CHAPTER 1

פָּרָק א

Mishnah 1

Moses received the Law¹ from Sinai and handed it down to Joshua, and Joshua to the elders,² and the elders to the prophets,³ and the prophets handed it down to the men of the Great Assembly.⁴ They said three things: Be deliberate in judgment,⁵ raise up many disciples, and make a fence⁶ round the Law.⁷

מִשְׁנָה א

מֹשֶׁה קִבֵּל יְהוָה מִסִּינַי, וּמְסָרָה לְיִהוֹשֻׁעַ, וְיִהוֹשֻׁעַ לְזִקְנִים, וְזִקְנִים לְנְבִיאִים, וְנְבִיאִים מִסְרֹוֹה לְאַנְשֵׁי כְנֶסֶת הַגְּדוּלָה. הֵם אָמְרוּ שְׁלֹשָׁה דְבָרִים, יִהְיוּ מְתוּנִים בְּדִין, וְהַעֲמִידוּ תַלְמִידִים הַרְבֵּה, וַעֲשׂוּ סְיָג יִלְתוּרָה.

1 In this *Mishnah* the term *תּוֹרָה* refers to the *Oral Tradition* or *Oral Law* (*תּוֹרָה שֶׁבְעַלִּי*); but it is also variously used for the *Pentateuch* (*תּוֹרָה שֶׁבְכַתָּב*, *The Written Law*) and the entire *Scriptures* (*תּוֹרָה וְנְבִיאִים וְכַתוּבִים* or *תּוֹרָה וְנְבִיאִים וְכַתוּבִים*, *Pentateuch, Prophets and Hagiographa*). 2 *Joshua* 24, 31. The 'elders' were the 'Judges' of whom Eli was the last.* *זִקְנִים* would perhaps be preferable to *זִקְנִים*? (but the difficulty arises with the *indefinite* form *זִקְנִים*). 3 *Jeremiah* 7, 25. Samuel was the first and Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi were the last of these prophets. 4 Or *Great Synagogue*, a body of one hundred and twenty elders, judges, prophets, sages, teachers and scribes who returned from exile with Ezra whose spiritual regeneration of the people they continued by drawing up and enacting new rules and regulations and restrictions and laid the foundation of the *Liburgy*. *כְּנֶסֶת* is the popular reading, but *כְּנֶסֶת* (given in some Prayer Books) is grammatically the more correct form. 5 This was originally an injunction to judges to weigh facts and arguments and not pronounce hasty decisions. 6 *סְיָג* in the Prayer Book. 7 *i.e.*, to draw up cautionary regulations to act as a check against the committal of transgressions. Compare *תְּמִירָה* 161, *חֻזְלִין* 110a, *יְבָמוֹת* 20a. *See ADDENDA at the end of this *Tractate*.

Chapters 1-4 are largely ethical and metaphysical; Chapter 5 is predominantly *Haggadah* (folk-lore); and Chapter 6 contains homiletical exhortations and is characteristically similar to the preceding Chapters.

In the Prayer Book each Chapter is preceded, as a prologue, by a passage from *סִנְהֶדְרִין* 10¹, including a Scriptural quotation from *Isaiah* 60, 21, *כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל יֵשׁ לָהֶם חֶלֶק לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא, שֶׁצִּיאָמַר וְעַמּוֹ בְּלֹם צְדִיקִים לְעוֹלָם יִירָשׁוּ, אֶרֶץ, נֶצֶר מִשְׁעֵי מַעֲשֵׂה דַי לְהַתְפָּאֵר, All Israel have a portion in the world to come, as it is said, And thy people shall be all righteous, they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, that I be glorified, and concludes, as an epilogue, with a sentence from *מִכּוֹת* 31⁶ followed by a quotation from *Isaiah* 42, 21 (as given at the end of Chapter 6).*

Note. The text given in the Prayer Book varies considerably from the *Mishnayoth* text in the numbering of some of the *Mishnahs* and in some terms and phrases; these discrepancies are indicated in the **Notes**.

* Sometimes it is necessary to read two Chapters on one or two Sabbaths before *ראש השנה* for completion of the whole *Tractate*.

§ Some prefer the orthography **Aboth**.

1 These two belonged to the period of the זוגות, Pairs (see זרעים, INTRODUCTION; 26; פאה 22). 2 The term בן in the translations of this Tractate in the Prayer Book is given as son, but here ben is retained throughout in uniformity with ben in all the other Tractates. 3 A city in Manasseh (I Kings 11, 26; II Chronicles 4, 17; identical with צרדה, Judges 7, 22; probably the same as צרתן near Beth-Shean and Succoth, Joshua 3, 16). 4 See חגיגה 20a. 5 In some editions ממצ. This refers to the two preceding Sages (in Mishnah 3), or, less probably, to the unnamed teachers in the period between Antigonus of Socho and Jose ben Joezer. 6 In some editions איש צרידה is added here. 7 Compare סנהדרין 100b, ברכות 7b. 8 ויהיה in some texts. 9 Disciples as a rule used to sit on the floor or on a lower level before their teacher.

Mishnah 5

משנה ה

Jose ben Jochanan of Jerusalem said,¹ Let thy house be open wide,² and let the needy be members of thy household;³ and engage not in much gossip with womankind.⁴ They said this of one's own wife;⁵ how much more* [does this apply] to the wife of one's fellow! Hence⁶ the Sages have said, Whensoever⁷ a man engages in much gossip with womankind he brings evil⁸ upon himself, (and) neglects the study of the Law, and in the end will inherit Gehenna.⁹

יוסי בן יוחנן איש ירושלים יאמר יהי ביתך יפתוח לרוחה, ויהיו עניים בני ביתך, ואל תרבה שיחה עם האשה. יבאשתו אמרו, *קל וחמר באשת חברו. ימכאן אמרו חכמים 'כל זמן שאדם מרבה שיחה עם האשה גורם ירעה לעצמו ובוטל מדברי תורה וסופו יורש יגיהנם.

1 Literally says. 2 As a sign of cordiality, welcome and hospitality (compare 92 סיכה). 3 Hospitableness must be practised. 4 Protracted gossip leads to loose talk and lewdness. 5 Trivial talk with even one's own wife may lead to trouble. § 6 בן traditional reading. 7 In some texts שיחה, Whosoever engages in much gossip. 8 The risk of immorality. 9 Or Gehinnom (גהנום), a glen to the S.W. of Jerusalem where Moloch was worshipped; it was used as a term for purgatory, hell (as opposed to עדרן) where the wicked suffered punishment in the hereafter. *קל וחומר, an inference a minori ad majus (a conclusion from minor to major—and vice versa). §See the ADDENDA at the end of this Tractate.

Mishnah 6

משנה ו

Joshua ben Perachiah and Nittai¹ the Arbelite² received [the tradition] from them.³ Joshua ben Perachiah

יהושע בן פרחיה ונתיאי הארבלים קבלו מהם. יהושע בן פרחיה

Mishnah 2

משנה ב

Simon the Just¹ was one of the last survivors of the Great Assembly. He used to say, Upon three things is the world based:² upon the Law, upon [Divine] service,³ and upon the practice of charity.⁴

ישמעון הצדיק היה משירי כנסת הגדולה. הוא היה אומר על שלשה דברים העולם יעומד, על התורה, ועל העבודה, ועל גמילות חסדים.

1 Either Simon ben Onias I (High Priest 310-291 B.C.E.), or, more probably, his grandson Simon II (High Priest 219-199 B.C.E.). 2 Compare Mishnah 18 of this Chapter. 3 In its original sense, Temple service. 4 Corresponding to religion, divine prayer, and humaneness. גמילות חסדים to all in need of help (not only to the habitual poor).

Mishnah 3

משנה ג

Antigonus of Socho¹ received [the tradition] from Simon the Just. He used to say, Be not like servants that minister² to the master on the condition of receiving a reward, but be³ like servants that minister² to the master without the condition of receiving a reward;⁴ and let the fear⁵ of heaven be upon you.⁶ *In some texts על מנת שלא

אנטיונוס איש יסוכו קבל משמעון הצדיק. הוא היה אומר אל תהיו כעבדים יהמשמשין את-הרב על מנת לקבל פרס, אלא יהיו כעבדים יהמשמשין את-הרב *שלא על מנת לקבל פרס; ויהי מורא שמים עליכם.

1 Or Soco. In some texts, the Biblical Hebrew form שוכו. There are two towns of this name, both in Judah, one seven miles N.E. of Gath and the other ten miles S.W. of Ziph. See Joshua 15, 35. (See Mishnah 11.) 2 המשמשים in the Prayer Book. 3 ויהי in some texts. 4 viz., God must be served from pure motives. 5 i.e., awe and reverence. 6 Compare ברכות 5b.

Mishnah 4

משנה ד

Jose¹ ben² Joezer of Zeredah³ and Jose ben Jochanan of Jerusalem⁴ received [the tradition] from them.⁵ Jose ben Joezer⁶ said, Let thy house be a meeting-house for the wise⁷ and⁸ sit amidst the dust of their feet⁹ and⁸ drink in their words with thirst.

יוסי בן יועזר איש צרדה, ויוסי בן יוחנן איש ירושלים קבלו מהם. יוסי בן יועזר אומר יהי ביתך בית ועד לחכמים, ויהוי מתאבק בעפר רגליהם, ויהוי שותה בצמא את-דבריהם.

Mishnah 9

Simon ben Shatach said, Be¹ most searching in the examination of (the) witnesses, and be² heedful of thy words,³ lest therefrom they learn to utter falsehood.

משנה ט
שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן שַׁטַּח אוֹמֵר יְהוֹי מְרַבֶּה לְחַקוֹר אֶת-הָעֵדִים, יְהוֹי זְהִיר בְּדַבְרֵיהֶ, שֶׁמָּא מִתּוֹכָם יִלְמְדוּ לְשַׁקֵּר.

1 In some texts, הָיָה. 2 וְהוֹי in some texts. 3 Not to suggest to a witness by an injudicious remark to distort and falsify his evidence.

Mishnah 10

Shemaiah and Abtalion¹ received [the tradition] from them.² Shemaiah said, Love labour,³ (and) hate lordship⁴ and seek not intimacy with the ruling powers.⁵

משנה י
שִׁמְעִיָּה וְאַבְטַלְיוֹן קִבְּלוּ יְמֵהֶם. שִׁמְעִיָּה אוֹמֵר אָהֵב אֶת-יְהִמְלָאָה, וְשָׂא אֶת-יְהִרְבָּנוֹת, וְאַל תִּתְדַע לְרִשּׁוֹת.

1 They belonged to the זוגות (see Mishnah 4 of this Chapter). 2 viz., the preceding. 3 Literally 'the labour.' Manual labour was not to be despised—in fact it was laid down as a virtuous necessity for a man to train his son a handicraft (compare 21 קדושין). 4 Compare הוריות 10a; ראש השנה 17a; יומא 6b. 5 When having business transactions or otherwise (compare עירובין 41b; פסחים 113a).

Mishnah 11

Abtalion said, Ye sages, be cautious of your words,¹ lest ye incur the penalty of exile and be banished to a place of evil waters² [whereof] the disciples that come after you drink and die, and the Heavenly Name be profaned.³

משנה יא
אַבְטַלְיוֹן אוֹמֵר חֲכָמִים הִזְהָרוּ בְּדַבְרֵיכֶם, שֶׁמָּא תִּחְוְבוּ חוֹבַת גְּלוֹת, וְתִגְלוּ לְמָקוֹם יְמִים הָרָעִים, וְיִשְׁתּוּ הַתְּלִמִּידִים הַבָּאִים אַחֲרֵיכֶם וְיִקְוּתוּ, וְנִמְצָא שֵׁם שָׁמַיִם מִתְחַלְלִי.

1 viz., that their teaching should be most precise and unequivocal and leave no room for misrepresentation and heterodoxy. 2 Referring to Alexandria in Egypt where the Jews fostered Hellenistic Judaism and heresy. 3 In illustration the commentators refer to Mishnah 3 of this Chapter that the teaching of Antigonos of Socho was misrepresented by two of his disciples, Zadok (זדוק) and Boëthus (בוייתוס), who taught that there is no immortality of the soul and no reward in the hereafter and led to the foundation of the two anti-Pharisaic parties, the Sadducees (צדוקים) and Boëthusians (בוייתוסין).

said,⁴ Procure thyself a teacher, (and) acquire unto thyself an associate,⁵ and⁶ judge all men in the scale of merit.⁷

אוֹמֵר, עֲשֵׂה לְךָ רַב וּקְנֵה לְךָ חֵבֵר, יְהוֹי דָן אֶת-כָּל-הָאָדָם לְכַף זְכוּתוֹ.

1 In some texts וְנָתַי. 2 These two were of the זוגות (see Mishnah 4 of this Chapter). 3 i.e., the preceding. 4 Literally says. 5 See Appendix, Note 12. 6 וְהוֹי in some texts. 7 i.e., charitably.

Mishnah 7

Nittai* the Arbelite said,¹ Keep thee far from an evil neighbour, (and) associate not thyself with the godless² and abandon not belief in retribution.³

משנה ז
נִיתַי הָאַרְבֵּלִי אוֹמֵר הִרְחַק מִשָּׂכֵן רָע, וְאַל תִּתְחַבֵּר לְרָשָׁע וְאַל תִּתְאַשׁ מִן-יְהִפּוּרְעָנוֹת.

1 See the preceding Mishnah, Notes 1-4. 2 Literally wicked. 3 sc., when one sees the transgressors prosper the idea of Divine punishment must not be given up. Some render this nevertheless yield not thyself to despair in view of retribution. וְהִפּוּרְעָנוֹת in some texts. *נָתַי in some texts.

Mishnah 8

Judah ben Tabbai¹ and Simon ben Shetach² received [the tradition] from them.³ Judah ben Tabbai said, Act not the part of the counsel,⁴ (and) when the parties to a cause⁵ stand before thee let them be in thine eyes as wicked,⁶ but when they have departed from thy presence let them be regarded as innocent⁷ so soon as they have acquiesced in the verdict.⁸

משנה ח
יְהוּדָה בֶּן טַבַּאי, וְשִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן שַׁטַּח קִבְּלוּ יְמֵהֶם. יְהוּדָה בֶּן טַבַּאי אוֹמֵר אַל תַּעַשׂ עֲצָמָה כְּעוֹרְכֵי הַדַּיָּוָן, וְכִשְׁיֵהוּ בְּעֵלֵי דִינִים עוֹמְדִים לְפָנַי יְהִיוּ בְּעֵינַי כְּרָשָׁעִים, וְכִשְׁנֹפְטָרִים מִלְּפָנַי יְהִיוּ בְּעֵינַי כְּזוֹכָאֵן כְּשֶׁקִּבְּלוּ עֲלֵיהֶם אֶת-הַדִּין.

1 in some texts. 2 They belonged to the זוגות (see Mishnah 4 of this Chapter). 3 sc., the foregoing. 4 One must not attempt to influence the judges. וְהַדַּיָּוָן in some editions. 5 וְהַדִּין in some texts. 6 i.e., as guilty. 7 כְּזוֹכָאֵים in some texts. 8 A defendant must not be suspected as a robber nor the sworn witness as a liar once a case is settled (see שבת 97a, 127b).

Mishnah 15

משנה טו

Shammai said, Make thy [study of the] Law a fixed duty,¹ say little and do much,² and³ receive every man with a cheerful countenance.⁴

שַׁמַּי אָמַר עֲשֵׂה תוֹרָתְךָ יִקְבַּע, אָמֹר מְעַט וַעֲשֵׂה יִהְיֶה יְהוָה מְקַבֵּל אֶת-כָּל-הָאָדָם בְּסִבָּר יְפֹתִים.

1 viz., at regular periods. 2 Compare גִּזְרֵי 6b. 3 וְהִי in some editions. 4 Showing friendliness in all transactions and on all occasions. Compare 11², 21⁰, 31², 41^{1,3}.

Mishnah 16

משנה טז

Rabban Gamaliel¹ said, Provide thyself a teacher,² (and) relieve thyself of doubt, and accustom not thyself to tithe by conjecture.³

רַבֵּן גַּמְלִיאֵל אָמַר עֲשֵׂה לָךְ יָרֵב וְהִסְתַּלַּק מִן-הַסֵּפֶק, וְאַל תִּרְבֶּה לַעֲשׂוֹת יְאוּמָדוֹת.

1 Gamaliel I, the grandson of Hillel (some take him to be the son of Hillel). See שַׁבָּת 15a. 2 Compare Mishnah 6 of this Chapter. Here the reference is to a scholar or judge who is urged to consult another authority before formulating any decisions on legal questions. 3 Compare תְּרוּמוֹת 46. There must be no guesswork in apportioning the תְּרוּמוֹת and מַעֲשְׂרוֹת (see Appendix, Note 1).

Mishnah 17

משנה יז

Simon his son¹ said, I was brought up all my life amongst the Sages and I have found naught so essentially good as silence,² (and) not the study [of the Law] is of fundamental import³ but the practice [thereof],⁴ and whosoever is profuse of words occasions sin.⁵

שִׁמְעוֹן בְּנוֹ אָמַר כָּל-יָמֵי גִדְלָתִי בֵּין הַחֲכָמִים וְלֹא מָצָאתִי לְגוֹף טוֹב אֶלָּא שְׁתִּיקָה, וְלֹא הַמְדַרְשׁ הִוא הַעֲיָקָר אֶלָּא הַמַּעֲשֵׂה, וְכָל הַמְרַבֵּה דְבָרִים מְבִיא חַטָּא.

1 R. Simon the son of Rabban Gamaliel. 2 Compare Proverbs 17, 28; בְּבָא אֶלָּא 117a; בְּבָא מְצִיעָא 41; עִירֻבִין 41. In some texts מְשִׁיקָה instead of אֶלָּא. 3 שְׁתִּיקָה. 4 הִוא הַעֲיָקָר instead of עֲקָר. 5 Theory must be followed by practice; but correct practice cannot be achieved without the understanding of the underlying theoretical principles. Compare 3⁹, 17, 51⁴; כְּתוּבוֹת 7a; יוֹמָא 61. 5 Compare Proverbs 10, 19; גִּטִּין 31; חוּלִין 63b.

Mishnah 12

משנה יב

Hillel and Shammai¹ received [the tradition] from them.² Hillel said, Be³ thou of the disciples of Aaron, loving peace, and pursuing peace, loving [thy] fellow-creatures,⁴ and drawing them nigh to the Law.⁵

יְהִלֵּל וְשַׁמַּי קִבְּלוּ יְמֵהֶם. הִלֵּל אָמַר יְהוִי מִתְלַמִּידֵי שֶׁל אַהֲרֹן, אוֹהֵב שְׁלוֹם, וְרוֹדֵף שְׁלוֹם, אוֹהֵב אֶת-הַבְּרִיּוֹת, וּמְקַרְבֵּן לַתּוֹרָה.

1 The last and most renowned of the זוגות (see Mishnah 4 of this Chapter). 2 The foregoing (see יוֹמָא 32b, שַׁבָּת 31a). 3 הָיָה in some texts. 4 Irrespective of race or creed. Compare 11⁵, 21⁰, 41^{1,3}, 61. 5 To an understanding of the existence of One God and the recognition and practice of His just moral laws.

Mishnah 13

משנה יג

He used to say, A¹ name made great is a name² destroyed,³ (and) he that adds not to his [store of] knowledge decreases it;⁴ (and) he who studies⁵ not is deserving of death;⁶ and one who makes wordly use of the crown [of the Law]⁷ shall waste away.⁸

הוּא הָיָה אָמַר יִגַּד שְׁמָא, אֶבֶר יִשְׁמִיָּה; וְדֹלָא מוֹסִיף יִסִּיף; וְדֹלָא יִלְיֵף קִטְלָא חַיִּיב; וְדִישְׁתַּמֵּשׁ יִבְתָּא חִלְף.

1 These sayings by Hillel are in Aramaic (compare 26, 52^{2,23}). 2 In some editions שְׁמָא. 3 The ambitious seeker after fame is liable to lose his reputation. 4 יִסִּיף in some texts. 5 Some render it teaches (from the Piel form of יִלְיֵף). 6 יִלְיֵף in some texts. 6 Compare יוֹמָא 41, 38b. 7 i.e., makes use of his knowledge for self-advancement or for non-moral and non-spiritual advantage. In some editions וְדִישְׁתַּמֵּשׁ. 8 i.e., he will abandon his faith and his people from whom he will disappear as if wasted away.

Mishnah 14

משנה יד

He¹ was [also] wont to say, If I am not for myself, who will be for me?² And if I am for mine own self, what am I?³ And if not now, when [then]?⁴

יְהוּא הָיָה אָמַר אִם אֵין אֲנִי לִי מִי לִי? וְכִשְׁאֲנִי לַעֲצָמִי מָה יֵאָנִי? וְאִם לֹא עַכְשָׁיו יֵאִמְתִּי?

1 sc., Hillel. 2 i.e., one can only attain virtue through his own strivings. 3 Selfishness and disregard of others are traits of inhumanity. 4 Moral duties must be carried out as occasions arise and must not be postponed, lest the opportunities pass by.

of the Almighty. 5 See 3¹³, 4¹⁷. 6 **וְהוֹדָה** in some texts. 7 Compare 4². 8 **עֲבָרָה** in some editions. 9 **וְהִסְתַּכַּל** in some editions. 10 Compare 3¹, **תְּגִינָה** 2¹. 11 In some texts **וְאֵין**. 12 Referring to the Omniscient. 13 **וְנִכְתְּבִים** in some texts. 14 Compare 3²⁰; *Exodus* 32, 32; *Malachi* 3, 16; *Daniel* 7, 10; note the frequent forms **בְּסִפּוּר הַתִּיּוֹם**, **בְּסִפּוּר גְּאוּלָּה וְיִשׁוּעָה**, **בְּסִפּוּר הַתִּיּוֹם**, etc., in the *Liturgy*.

Mishnah 2

Rabban Gamaliel the son of R. Judah¹ the Prince said, Excellent is the study of the Law in combination with some worldly pursuit,² for the exertion entailed by them both makes thoughts of sin to be forgotten. All study of the Law without toil must eventually prove futile³ and bring iniquity in its train.⁴ (And) let all that labour⁵ with [the interests of] the congregation labour⁶ with them from heavenly motives, for then the merit of their fathers supports them,⁷ and their righteousness endures for ever.⁸ 'And as for you', [will God then say,] 'I will bestow on you great reward,⁹ as if¹⁰ you had [yourselves] wrought [it all]'.

1 **רַבִּי** (see the foregoing *Mishnah*). Compare **קְדוּשָׁן** 32b, **שֶׁבֶת** 63a. 2 Some authorities render it *with good manners* (*meeekness* and *morality*). 3 Study is of no avail without material support; compare 3¹⁷, **אִם אֵין קָמַח אֵין תּוֹרָה**. 4 Poverty leads to sin. 5 **הֶעֱוֹסִקִים**, *that occupy themselves*, in some texts. 6 In some texts, **עוֹסִקִים**. 7 In some texts, **מְסִיעֵתָם**. 8 Effort imbued with righteousness leads to permanent good result. 9 Some render this by the less definite and less direct: 'I will account you worthy of great recompense.' 10 **כְּאִלּוּ** in some texts.

Mishnah 3

Be on your guard¹ [in your relations] with the ruling power, for they bring no man near to them except for their own interests;² seeming to be friends such time as it is to their own advantage, they stand not with a man in the hour of his need.

מְשֻׁנָּה ב
רַבֵּן גַּמְלִיאֵל בְּנוֹ שֶׁל רַבִּי יְהוּדָה הַנָּשִׂיא אָמַר, יָפָה תַלְמוּד תּוֹרָה עִם דֶּרֶךְ אֶרֶץ, שִׁיגִיעַת שְׁגִיָּה מִשְׂכַּחַת עוֹן. וְכָל תּוֹרָה שָׂאִין עִמָּה מְלָאכָה, סוּפָה בְּטָלָה, וְגוֹרְרָת עוֹן. וְכָל הַעֲמֵלִים עִם הַצְּבוּר, יִהְיוּ עֲמֵלִים עִמָּהֶם לְשֵׁם שָׁמַיִם, שְׂזוּכוֹת אֲבוֹתָם מְסִיעֵתָן וְצַדִּיקָתָם עוֹמְדָת לְעַד. וְאַתָּם מַעֲלָה אָנִי עֲלֵיכֶם יִשְׁכַּר הַרְבֵּה יִכְאִילוּ עֲשִׂיתָם.

מְשֻׁנָּה ג
יְהוּוּ זְהִירִין בְּרִשׁוֹת שָׂאִין מְקַרְבִּין לוֹ לְאָדָם אֲלָא יִלְצוֹרֶךְ עֲצָמָן; גְּרָאִין כְּאוֹהֲבִין בְּשַׁעַת הַנְּאֻתָן, וְאֵין עוֹמְדִין לוֹ לְאָדָם בְּשַׁעַת דְּחִקוֹ.

Mishnah 18

Rabban Simon¹ ben Gamaliel said, By three things is the world sustained:² by judgment, (and) by truth,³ and by peace, as it is said,⁴ *execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates*.

1 Son of Gamaliel II and father of Rabbi; some identify him with Simon in the preceding *Mishnah*. 2 Compare *Mishnah* 2 of this Chapter. In some texts, **קִיָּם** instead of **עוֹמֵד**. 3 The order in some texts is **וְעַל הַדִּין** **עַל הָאֱמֶת**, *by truth, (and) by judgment*. 4 See *Zechariah* 8, 16.

CHAPTER 2

Mishnah 1

Rabbi¹ said, Which² is the right path that a man should choose³ for himself? Any that is an honour to those that pursue it,⁴ and brings him honour from mankind.⁵ (And) be⁶ heedful [in the performance of a seemingly] light precept⁷ as of a grave one, for thou knowest not the grant of the reward of each precept. (And)⁸ ponder the loss incurred through [the non-fulfilment of] a precept against its reward [secured by the observance thereof], and the gain [that ensues] from transgression⁸ against its loss [which is involved]. (And) contemplate⁹ three things,¹⁰ and thou wilt not¹¹ come within the power of transgression:⁸ know what is above thee—an [all-] seeing eye,¹² and an [all-] hearing ear,¹² and all thy deeds recorded¹³ in a book.¹⁴

1 Judah ha-Nasi (135-219 c.e.). 2 **וְאֵיזוֹ** in some texts. 3 Compare 3¹⁹. 4 Some prefer the form **לְעוֹשֶׂה** and render it *to its Maker*, sc., meeting with the approbation

מְשֻׁנָּה יח
רַבֵּן שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן גַּמְלִיאֵל אָמַר עַל שְׁלֹשָׁה דְּבָרִים הָעוֹלָם עוֹמֵד, עַל הַדִּין, וְעַל הָאֱמֶת, וְעַל הַשְּׁלוֹם, יִשְׁנֹאֲמַר אֱמֶת וּמִשְׁפַּט שְׁלוֹם, שִׁפְטוּ בְּשַׁעְרֵיכֶם.

פָּרָק ב

מְשֻׁנָּה א

רַבִּי אָמַר אֵיזוֹהוּ דֶּרֶךְ יִשְׁרָה שְׂיֻבוּר לוֹ הָאָדָם? כָּל-שֶׂהִיא תַפְאֵרֶת לְעוֹשֶׂיהָ וְתַפְאֵרֶת לוֹ מִן-הָאָדָם. וְהוּוּ זְהִיר וְהוּוּ זְהִיר בְּמִצְוָה קְלָה כְּבִחְמוּרָה, שָׂאִין אֶתָּה יוֹדֵעַ מִתֵּן שְׂכָרָן שֶׁל מִצְוֹת. וְהוּוּ מְחַשֵּׁב הַפְּסֵד מִצְוָה כְּנֶגֶד שְׂכָרָה, וְשִׁכְרָה עֲבִירָה כְּנֶגֶד הַפְּסֵדָה. וְהוּוּ הִסְתַּכַּל בְּשִׁלְשָׁה דְּבָרִים וְאֵי אֶתָּה כָּא לִידֵי עֲבִירָה, דַּע מֵה-לְמַעְלָה מִמֶּךָ, עֵין רוֹאֶה וְאֵזוֹן שׁוֹמֵעַת, וְכָל-מַעֲשֵׂיךָ בְּסִפּוּר וְנִכְתְּבִין.