

Pirkei Avot

Words that Bind OR Words that Break

Source Sheet by Bonnie Levine

Pirkei Avot 1:12

(12) Hillel and Shammai received [the oral tradition] from them. Hillel used to say: be of the disciples of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing peace, loving **mankind** and drawing them close to the Torah.

משנה אבות א'י"ב

(יב) הִלֵּל וְשַׁמַּי קִבְּלוּ מֵהֵם. הִלֵּל אָמַר, הָיִי מִתְּלָמִידָיו שֶׁל אַהֲרֹן, אוֹהֵב שְׁלוֹם וְרוֹדֵף שְׁלוֹם, אוֹהֵב אֶת הַבְּרִיּוֹת וּמְקַרְבֵּן לַתּוֹרָה:

Pirkei Avot 2:4

(4) He used to say: do His will as though it were your will, so that He will do your will as though it were His. Set aside your will in the face of His will, so that he may set aside the will of others for the sake of your will. Hillel said: do not separate yourself **from the community**, Do not trust in yourself until the day of your death, Do not judge **your fellow man** until you have reached his place. Do not say something that cannot be understood [trusting] that in the end it will be understood. Say not: 'when I shall have leisure I shall study;' perhaps you will not have leisure.

משנה אבות ב'ד'

(ד) הוּא הִזָּה אָמַר, עֲשֵׂה רְצוֹנִי כְרְצוֹנֶךָ, כְּדִי שֶׁיַּעֲשֶׂה רְצוֹנֶךָ כְּרְצוֹנִי. בִּטֹּל רְצוֹנֶךָ מִפְּנֵי רְצוֹנִי, כְּדִי שֶׁיִּבְטֹל רְצוֹן אֲחֵרִים מִפְּנֵי רְצוֹנֶךָ. הִלֵּל אָמַר, אַל תִּפְרֹשׁ מִן הַצְּבוּר, וְאֵל תֵּאֱמִין בְּעֶצְמֶךָ עַד יוֹם מוֹתֶךָ, וְאֵל תִּדְּיִן אֶת חֲבֵרְךָ עַד שֶׁתִּגִּיעַ לְמְקוֹמוֹ, וְאֵל תֵּאֱמַר דְּבַר שְׂאִי אֶפְשֶׁר לְשַׁמֵּעַ, שְׂסוּפוּ לְהַשְׁמִיעַ. וְאֵל תֵּאֱמַר לְכַשְׁאֲפֵנָה אֲשַׁנֶּה, שְׂמָא לֹא תִפְנֶה:

Pirkei Avot 3:14

(14) He used to say: Beloved is **man** for he was created in the image [of God]. Especially beloved is he for it was made known to him that he had been created in the image [of God], as it is said: "for in the image of God He made man" (Genesis 9:6). Beloved are **Israel** in that they were called children to the All-Present. Especially beloved are they for it was made known to them that they are called children of the All-Present, as it is said: "you are children to the Lord your God" (Deuteronomy 14:1). Beloved are **Israel** in that a precious vessel was given to them. Especially beloved are they for it was made known to them that the desirable instrument, with which the world had been created, was given to them, as it is said: "for I give you good instruction; forsake not my teaching" (Proverbs 4:2).

משנה אבות ג'י"ד

(יד) הוּא הִזָּה אָמַר, חֲבִיב אָדָם שֶׁנִּבְרָא בְּצֶלֶם. חֲבִיב יִתְרָה נוֹדַעַת לוֹ שֶׁנִּבְרָא בְּצֶלֶם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (בְּרֵאשִׁית ט) כִּי בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹקִים עָשָׂה אֶת הָאָדָם. חֲבִיבֵינִי יִשְׂרָאֵל שֶׁנִּקְרְאוּ בְּנִים לְמַקּוֹם. חֲבִיב יִתְרָה נוֹדַעַת לָהֶם שֶׁנִּקְרְאוּ בְּנִים לְמַקּוֹם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (דְּבָרִים יד) בְּנִים אַתֶּם לַיהוָה אֱלֹקֵיכֶם. חֲבִיבֵינִי יִשְׂרָאֵל שֶׁנֶּתַן לָהֶם כְּלֵי חֲמֻדָּה. חֲבִיב יִתְרָה נוֹדַעַת לָהֶם שֶׁנֶּתַן לָהֶם כְּלֵי חֲמֻדָּה שֶׁבּוּ נִבְרָא הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (מִשְׁלֵי ד) כִּי לֶקַח טוֹב נָתַתִּי לָכֶם, תּוֹרַתִּי אֵל תַּעֲזוּבוּ:

Pirkei Avot 4:1

(1) Ben Zoma said: Who is wise? He who learns from **every man**, as it is said: "From all who taught me have I gained understanding" (Psalms 119:99). Who is mighty? He who subdues his [evil] inclination, as it is said: "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that rules his spirit than he that takes a city" (Proverbs 16:32). Who is rich? He who rejoices in his lot, as it is said: "You shall enjoy the fruit of your labors, you shall be happy and you shall prosper" (Psalms 128:2) "You shall be happy" in this world, "and you shall prosper" in the world to come. Who is he that is honored? He who honors his **fellow human beings** as it is said: "For I honor those that honor Me, but those who spurn Me shall be dishonored" (I Samuel 2:30).

Pirkei Avot 5:17

(17) Every dispute that is for the sake of Heaven, will in the end endure; But one that is not for the sake of Heaven, will not endure. Which is the controversy that is for the sake of Heaven? Such was the controversy of Hillel and Shammai. And which is the controversy that is not for the sake of Heaven? Such was the controversy of Korah and all his congregation.

Pirkei Avot 6:11

(11) Whatever the Holy Blessed One created in His world, he created only for His glory, as it is said: "**All who are linked to My name, whom I have created, formed and made for My glory**" (Isaiah 43:7), And it says: "The Lord shall reign for ever and ever" (Exodus 15:18).

***Concluding Passage

Said Rabbi Hananiah ben Akashya: It pleased the Holy Blessed One to grant merit to **Israel**, that is why He gave them Torah and commandments in abundance, as it is said, "The Lord was pleased for His righteousness, to make Torah great and glorious" (Isaiah 42:21).

משנה אבות ד:א'

(א) בן זומא אומר, איזהו חכם, הלומד **מכל אדם**, שנאמר (תהלים קיט) מכל מלמדי השכלתי כי עדותיך שיחה לי. איזהו גבור, הכובש את יצרו, שנאמר (משלי טז) טוב ארך אפים מגבור ומשל ברוחו מלכד עיר. איזהו עשיר, השמח בחלקו, שנאמר (תהלים קכח) יגיע כפיך כי תאכל אשריך וטוב לך. אשריך, בעולם הזה. וטוב לך, לעולם הבא. איזהו מכבד, המכבד את **הבריות**, שנאמר (שמואל א ב) כי מכבדי אכבד ובזי יקלו:

משנה אבות ה:י"ז

(יז) כל מחלוקת שהיא לשם שמים, סופה להתקיים. ושאינה לשם שמים, אין סופה להתקיים. איזו היא מחלוקת שהיא לשם שמים, זו מחלוקת הלל ושמיאי. ושאינה לשם שמים, זו מחלוקת קרח וכל עדתו:

משנה אבות ו:י"א

(יא) כל מה שברא הקדוש ברוך הוא בעולמו, לא בראו אלא לכבודו, שנאמר (ישעיה מג), כל הנקרא בשמי ולכבודי בראתיו יצרתיו אף עשיתיו, ואומר (שמות טו), ה' ימלך לעלם ועד.

רבי חנניא בן עקשיא אומר, רצה הקדוש ברוך הוא לזכות את **ישראל**, לפיכך הרבה להם תורה ומצוות, שנאמר (ישעיה מב) ה' חפץ למען צדקו יגדיל תורה ויאדיר: