

The Talmudic Anthology: Tales and Teachings of the Rabbis (1945) by Louis I. Newman Quotes

One who causes himself pain by abstinence from something he desires is called a sinner. Nazir, 19.

Rab said: "A man will have a demerit in his record on Judgment Day for everything he beheld with his eyes and declined to enjoy." Y. Kiddushin, 4.

NEIGHBORS IN PARADISE Rabbi Simeon ben Yohai prayed that he might behold his neighbor in Paradise, and was informed in a dream that it would be a certain butcher whose name and place of residence were also given him. The Rabbi paid the butcher a visit and found him to be a wealthy and charitable man. He called him aside and said: "Pray, tell me the good deeds you have performed." The butcher replied that he distributed meat to the poor without charge. This, however, did not satisfy the Rabbi, and he continued: "Tell me of some unusual deed of goodness you have done." The butcher bethought himself and said: "I am the collector of the customs at this port. Once the captain of an arriving ship declared to me: 'I have a secret treasure on my vessel; buy it from me for ten thousand gold pieces, sight unseen.' I protested, but he was firm, saying: 'If you do not make the purchase, you will regret it.' "I counted the money into his hand, and he delivered to me two hundred Jewish prisoners, men and women. I welcomed them, clothed them, gave them shelter, and later presented them with dowries for marriage among themselves, since they were all youths. The most beautiful girl I gave to my own son, and invited them to the wedding feast. Everyone rejoiced, except one young man who could not restrain his tears. On being questioned, he said to me: 'Your son's bride was my betrothed before we were made captives.' I offered him a fortune as a compensation for surrendering her, but he answered: 'She is dearer to me than all the gold of the world.' Thereupon I commanded my son to divorce her, and delivered her in marriage to the youth, together with the money wherewith I had sought to test him." Rabbi Simeon, on hearing this tale, exclaimed: "I thank the Lord for deeming me worthy to be your neighbor in Paradise." Intr. to Tanhuma, Buber, 135.

If you do not teach the ox to plow in his youth, it will be difficult to teach him when he is grown. Midrash Mishle, 22.

A calf may wish to suckle, but the cow wishes even more to give suck. Pesahim, 112.

Had the Torah not been given, man could have learned from the ant not to rob; from the dove not to commit adultery; from the cat to be modest ; from the rooster to have good manners, etc. Erubin, 100.

What is the prime virtue? To be pure in the eyes of God and men. Shekalim, 3.

Rabbi Judah ben Ilai said: "He who translates a verse with strict literalness is a falsifier, and he who makes additions to it is a blasphemer." Kiddushin, 49a.

All beginnings are difficult. Mekilta to Jethro, 19, 5.

Rabbi Aha bar Hanina said: "If Israel had not sinned, only the Pentateuch and Joshua would have been given." Nedarim, 22b.

Moses wished to know why he must die. God said: "Did not Adam die?"

"Adam brought death through the serpent," replied Moses, "And I brought life through the serpent."

"Did not Noah die?"

"Noah prayed not for his generation, and I prayed for mine."

"Did not Abraham die?" "Abraham brought up the wicked Ishmael."

"Did not Isaac die?" "Isaac reared Esau, Thine enemy."

"Did not Jacob die?" "Jacob did not receive the Torah."

"Thou, O Moses, hast sinned before Me."

"But Thou, O Lord," protested Moses, "offerest forgiveness to others, yet to me Thou wishest to refuse it."

"Thou hast committed, not one, but six sins before Me." "May I not at least see the Promised Land?" asked Moses. This was granted unto him. Dibre ha-Yamin shel Moshe.

Our Father Abraham transformed his Evil Impulse into a good impulse. Y. Berakot, 9, 5.

There is no absolute good without some evil in its midst. Tanhuma, Intr., 9.

Woe unto him who knows not the difference between good and evil. Sanhedrin, 103.

He who listens to the Rabbis and remembers their words, is like a Rabbi himself. Berakot, 47.

People do not keep things in mind until they have stumbled in them. Shabbat, 120.

God does not permit anything which might serve as a memorial and reminder of a sin committed by an individual or the community. The Torah says: "bull or sheep," not "calf or sheep" in order not to recall the sin of the Golden Calf. God did not reveal, nor will He reveal, the name of the tree, the fruit of which Adam ate with such disastrous consequences, lest whenever men see a tree of this kind, they might think of it as a tree of death." Pesikta Buber, 75b-76a.

A certain Eliezer ben Durdia, a life-long profligate, recommended himself to the favor of Heaven, by one prolonged act of penitence. He placed his head between his knees and did not cease from weeping until his soul departed from him. At the moment of his death a Voice from Heaven came forth and said: "Rabbi Eliezer ben Durdia is appointed to life everlasting." When Judah ha-Nasi heard of this, he wept, and said: "One man wins eternal life after a struggle of years; another finds it within a single hour." Abodah Zarah, 17a.

Shall he who has eaten garlic and has an unpleasant breath, eat still more garlic and be still more unpleasant? Kiddushin, 40.

Rabbi Jose ben Halafta said: "There is nothing more futile than to learn and not to teach." Kohelet Rabbah, 5, 9.

Raba said: "If there are more than twenty-five children in a class for elementary instruction, an assistant should be appointed. "Tf there are fifty children in a class, two competent instructors

should be in charge.” Rab Dimi said: “A teacher who teaches less than his fellow instructors should be dismissed. The other teachers will become more diligent both out of fear of dismissal, and out of gratitude. “If a teacher is to be appointed, preference should be given to him who teaches thoroughly, not to him who teaches much material superficially ; for an error once learned is difficult to unlearn.” Baba Batra, 21a.

“The words of the Torah are fruitful and multiply !” Hagigah, 3b.

There is no end to the goodness of a good woman, nor is there any end to the wickedness of an evil woman. Midrash Tehillim, 53.

The worthy man should follow the guilty man and aid him to remove all uncleanness, to subdue the Sitra Ahara, and to cure his soul. Thus will it be accounted to the man of merit as if he had begotten the man of guilt. Zohar, 11, 128b.

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