

Fill Your Own Cup Year Two June Sessions – Mishna Avot – Ethics of our Ancestors Chapter 2

1) Mishna Tractate Avot (Ancestors) 2:5

He would say:

A boor (unrefined person) cannot fear sin.

An ignorant person cannot be pious.

A person prone to being ashamed cannot learn.

An impatient person cannot teach.

Not all who frequently engage in business become wise.

In a place where there are not people, strive to be a person (ish).

משנה אבות ב:ה

הוא היה אומר: אין בור ירא חטא ולא עם הארץ חסיד ולא הביישן למד ולא הקפדן מלמד ולא כל המרבה בסחורה, מחכים.

ירא כל המו בה בסווד ה, מחכ ם. ובמקום שאין אנשים, השתדל להיות איש.

2) Genesis 32:25-29

Jacob was left alone. And an *ish* wrestled with him until the break of dawn. When he saw that he had not prevailed against him, he wrenched Jacob's hip at its socket, so that the socket of his hip was strained as he wrestled with him.

Then he said, "Let me go, for dawn is breaking." But he answered, "I will not let you go, unless you bless me."

The ish said, "What is your name?" He replied, "Jacob."

Said the *ish*, "Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with beings divine and human, and have prevailed."

בראשית לב: כה-כט

וַיּנָתָר יַעֲלֶב לְבַדָּוֹ וַיֵּאָבֵק אִישׁ עִמֹּוֹ עַד עֲלָוֹת הֹשֶׁחַר:

נוֹרָא כִּי לָא יָכֹל לוֹ וַיַּגַע בְּכַף־יְרֵכֵוֹ וַמַּקַעֹ כַּף־יָ,רֶךְ יַעַהָּב בִּהַאַבְקוֹ עַמִּוֹ:

וַיָּאמֶר שַׁלְחַנִי כָּי עָלָה הַשָּׁחַר וַיֹּאמֶר לָא אֲשְׁלְחַדְּ כִּי אָם־בַּרַכְתַּנִי:

ַניָאמֶר אַלָיו מַה־שְּׁמֶדְ וַיָּאמֶר יַעְקְב:

וַיּאמֶר לָא יַעֲלָב' יֵאָמֵר עוֹד' שִׁמְדּׁ כֵּי אִם־יִשְׂרָאֵל כֵּי־שַׂרִיתַ עִם־אֵלֹהֵים וְעִם־אַנִשִׁים וַתּוּכַל:

3) Genesis 37:12-17

One time, when his brothers had gone to pasture their father's flock at Shechem, Israel said to Joseph, "Your brothers are pasturing at Shechem. Come, I will send you to them." He answered, "I am ready." And he said to him, "Go and see how your brothers are and how the flocks are faring and bring me back word." So he sent him from the valley of Hebron.

When he reached Shechem, an *ish* came upon him wandering in the fields. The *ish* asked him, "What are you looking for?" He answered, "I am looking for my brothers. Could you tell me where they are pasturing?"

The *ish* said, "They have gone from here, for I heard them say: Let us go to Dothan." So Joseph followed his brothers and found them at Dothan.

<u>בראשית לז: יב-יזַ</u>

וַיָּאמֶר לוֹ לֶּדִּ־נָּא רְאֵּה אֶת־שְלְוֹם אַחֶּידְּ וְאֶת־שְלְוֹם הַצִּאן וַהַשְׁבָנִי דָּבֶר וַיִּשְׁלְחֵהוֹ מֵעֵמֶק חֶבְרוֹן וַיָּבָא שׁכמה:

נִיּמְצָאֵהוּ אִּׁישׁ וְהַנָּה תֹעֶה בַּשָּׁדֵה נִיִּשְׁאָלֵהוּ הָאֶישׁ לַאמִר מַה־תִּבַקִּשׁ:

וּאֶמֶר אֶת־אַחַי אָנֹכֵי מְ<u>בַקֶּשׁ הַגְּידָה־נְּ</u>א לִי אֵיפָׂה הַם רֹעֵים:

וּיָאמֶר הָאִישׁ נָסְעַוּ מָדֶּׁה כִּי שָׁמַּעְתִּי אְמְרִים נֵלְכָה דֹֹחָיָנָה וַיִּלֶךְ יוֹסֵף אַחַר אֶחָיו וַיִּמְצָאָם בְּדֹחָן:

4) Exodus 2:11-12

Sometime after that, when Moses had grown up, he went out to his kinsfolk and witnessed their labors. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his kinsmen. He turned this way and that and, seeing that there was no *ish*, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.

<u>שמות ב:יא-יב</u>

וַיְהֵי וּ בַּיָּמֵים הָהָם וַיִּגְדֵּל מֹשֶׁהֹ וַיֵּצֵא אֶל־אֶחָׁיו וַיַּרְאּ בָּסְבְלֹתֵם וַיַּרְאֹ אִישׁ מִצְּלִי מֵבֶּה אִישׁ־עִבְרָי מֵאֶחֵיו: וַיָּפֶן כֹּהֹ וָכָּה וַיִּרָא כִּי אֵין אֵישׁ וַיַּךְ אֶת־הַמִּצְלִי וַיִּטְמְנֵהוּ בַּחְוֹל:





5) Rashi on Avot 2:5

Strive to occupy yourself with the needs of the community, but in a place where there is a man [fulfilling that role], you should occupy yourself in your Torah.

<u>שי שם –</u>

השתדל ותעסוק בצרכי צבור אבל במקום שיש איש אתה תעסוק בתורתך:

6) Maimonides, Commentary on Mishna Avot 2:5

Strive- Wrestle with yourself and draw yourself towards acquiring the necessary traits. As there are no Sages there to teach you, you must teach yourself. And the Targum (Aramaic translation) of Genesis 32:25 – "And a man wrestled" is a man strived with him.

רמב"ם על משנה מסכת אבות ב:ה

וענין השתדל - האבק עם נפשך ומושכה לקניית המעלות. הואיל ואין שם חכמים שילמדוך - היה אתה מלמד נפשך. ותרגום "ויאבק איש" +בראשית לב כה+ - ואשתדל גברא עימיה.

7) Rabbi Sandra Lawson, Honoring Black Voices: Beyond the Rhythm

https://rabbisandra.substack.com/p/honoring-black-voices-beyond-the

Pirkei Avot 2:5 teaches: "In a place where there are no humans, strive to be a human." I return to this teaching often. It speaks to the responsibility to stand firm in dignity and justice, even when others act in ways that lack integrity. It reminds me that, no matter how often these dynamics play out, I will continue to show up in full authenticity. I will not shrink to make others comfortable, nor will I entertain demands that come from entitlement rather than genuine relationship.