

# TALMUD

by rabbi Solomon

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문화

## The Talmud, Read as Fable

Though Jews comprise a mere 0.2% of the global population, they account for nearly 30% of all Nobel Prize laureates. In the United States, they represent only about 3% of the population, yet 23% of the nation's wealthiest individuals—those listed among the top 400—are Jewish. Among the most illustrious Jewish figures stands Albert Einstein. Often remembered as a genius of modern physics, he is also famously said to have been a slow and unremarkable child—an irony that trails his name like a shadow of wonder. In this way, he remains a dramatic embodiment of the intellectual legacy the Talmud so powerfully represents.

What, then, makes the Jewish people so exceptional?

One could argue—without exaggeration—that their strength lies in the Talmud. It is through this ancient text that they have nurtured a unique tradition, one that continues to evolve as it is reimagined and woven into the very fabric of modern society. Its influence is both profound and far-reaching.

Jewish parents do not urge their children to be better than others; they inspire them to be different. Their philosophy of education is not rooted in rote learning, but in awakening the joy of discovery—the art of seeking and realizing knowledge on one's own. It is an education of principles, not prescriptions.

When children become absorbed in long, impassioned arguments over what may seem to adults like trifling matters, let us resist the urge to say, “Why argue over such nonsense? Stop bickering and go study.” To the Jewish way of thinking,

such debates are not distractions—they are exercises. They are rehearsals for a life of inquiry, a training ground for navigating complexity. Like the well-known proverb that advises, “Do not give your child a fish, but teach them how to fish,” these moments are not about the outcome but about learning how to think, to question, to grow.

The Talmud esteems questions more than answers, and regards the journey more than the destination. That is why, even after centuries, it reads as freshly and urgently as today’s news.

The Talmud is, above all, a philosophy. It lays bare the full spectrum of the human condition—our habits of mind and spirit, our joys and sorrows, our struggles and triumphs, our passions and obsessions, our desires and hatreds—through fable, anecdote, and lived experience.

Though the Talmud’s scope is immense, it is neither possible nor necessary to read it all. For within its fables lies a world—rich, vibrant, and often laced with humor. Even in the depths of sorrow, Jewish storytelling brims with levity and courage, a sublime lightness born from a free and resilient spirit—one that dares to laugh at fate, at the world, and even at itself.

This book gathers a modest selection from the Talmud’s vast treasury—short, compelling fables that are as meaningful as they are entertaining.

Through these tales, let us reflect with sincerity and curiosity: What is life? What is happiness? What is love? What is desire? How do we confront the dilemmas that stand before us? How do we endure misfortune? What is the nature of human connection, of society, of self?

Let us ponder, deeply yet playfully. And perhaps, along the way, discover how to become not just better—but entirely new.

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## The True Fool?



A man, often mocked as a fool by those around him, once went to seek the wisdom of a rabbi.

“Rabbi,” he said with quiet earnestness, “people call me a fool. And truth be told, I am aware that I lack cleverness. But tell me, am I truly a fool?”

The rabbi looked at him gently and replied,

“A person who knows he is a fool is no fool at all. So no, you are not a fool.”

The man hesitated, still troubled.

“Then why,” he asked, “do people continue to call me one?”

The rabbi paused and then said,

“Ah, in that case—you may indeed be a fool. For if you truly knew it within yourself, you would be wise. But if you believe you are a fool simply because others say so, then perhaps you are.”

And what about me?

I consider myself an intellectual—or at least, I like to think so. But what if I am, in fact, the fool I so confidently dismiss? Or is the very thought that I might be a fool the sign of someone thoughtful, someone uniquely perceptive?

Then again... perhaps the very act of asking the question is the foolish part.

## The Wise Will



In a distant city far from Jerusalem, there lived a wise old Jewish man. He resided alone, for he had sent his only beloved son to study in the holy city.

One day, the man fell gravely ill. The illness came swiftly and deeply, and he knew he would not live to see his son return. Realizing this, he wrote his will with careful deliberation:

“I leave all my possessions to my head servant. My son may choose one thing—any one thing—of his liking.”

He then made the will public and entrusted it to the head servant. Not long afterward, the man passed away. Overjoyed by the unexpected stroke of fortune, the servant wasted no time and set off for Jerusalem, his steps light with excitement.

The son, upon hearing of his father’s sudden death, was overwhelmed not only by grief but also by bewilderment at the contents of the will. After the funeral, he went to the home of a rabbi to seek clarity.

“Rabbi,” he asked, “why would my father not leave his inheritance to me? I cannot recall having done anything to anger him.”

The rabbi looked at him kindly and said,

“Read the will again. Your father loved you deeply. His decision was not careless—it was wise.”

“But how can that be?” the son protested. “He left everything to a servant and gave me nothing but the right to choose a single item!”

“Think from your father’s perspective,” the rabbi replied. “He knew he would die before your return. In your absence, he feared the head servant might steal the estate, squander it, or even hide your father’s death from you. So he left everything to the servant. That way, the servant—delighted by his sudden wealth—would hurry to Jerusalem to find you. And he would be careful to protect the assets, thinking they were his own.”

“But what good does that do me?” the son asked.

“Young man,” the rabbi smiled, “you forget a simple truth: all that belongs to a servant ultimately belongs to the master. And your father’s will states you may choose any one thing. Choose the servant—and with him, everything else becomes yours.”

The son finally understood the depth of his father’s intention. He did as the rabbi advised, claimed the servant as his one chosen possession—and then, in a final act of grace, set the man free.

From that day on, he was often heard to say:

“The wisdom of the old surpasses anything the young can yet imagine.”

## Three Acts of Reason



While traveling far from home, a man of Jerusalem fell ill and knew he would soon die. He summoned the innkeeper and gave him final instructions:

“When I am gone, my son will come from Jerusalem to claim my belongings. Give them to him. But be warned—many may pretend to be him.

To help you, I have already told my son that he must perform three acts of sound reason. That will be your sign.”

When the man passed away, the villagers gave him a proper Jewish burial. A messenger was dispatched to Jerusalem to notify the son. Upon hearing the news, the young man rushed to the city where his father had died. But he had no idea which inn his father had stayed at—for his father had expressly instructed him not to ask.

As he searched the streets, he spotted a woodcutter passing by with a cart full of firewood. He bought the wood and asked the man to deliver it to the inn where a traveler from Jerusalem had recently died. Then he quietly followed behind.

That was his first act of reason.

Upon reaching the inn, the young man was warmly received. The innkeeper, wanting to test him further, invited him to supper. The meal was modest but carefully prepared: five roasted doves and a single roasted chicken. Gathered

around the table were the innkeeper and his wife, their two sons, their two daughters, and the guest from Jerusalem—seven people in all.

“Please, kind guest,” said the innkeeper, “honor us by dividing the food.”

The young man declined politely, but the innkeeper insisted, and at last, he agreed. He began with the doves:

One to each of the two sons,  
One to each of the two daughters,  
One to the innkeeper and his wife,  
And the remaining two, he placed on his own plate.  
This was his second act of reason.

The innkeeper frowned but said nothing. The guest then proceeded to divide the chicken:

The head, he gave to the innkeeper and his wife.  
The two legs, one each to the sons.  
The wings, one each to the daughters.  
The entire body, he placed before himself.  
This was his third act of reason.

The innkeeper could no longer hold back.

“Is this how things are done in your land?” he exclaimed.  
“I said nothing about the doves, but this—this division of the chicken—I cannot accept!”

The young man calmly responded:

“I had no desire to divide the food. You insisted, so I did my best—with fairness and thought.

Three doves remained, and I gave them evenly: one to you and your wife, one to your sons, one to your daughters, and two to myself—three each.

As for the chicken: the head, naturally, belongs to the heads of the household—you and your wife.

The legs, to your sons—they are the strong pillars of this home.

The wings, to your daughters—for soon they will fly to new homes of their own.

And the body? I took it for myself—for I must return by ship, and I will need strength for the journey.

Tell me, was this not an act of reason?”

The innkeeper fell silent, then smiled.

He stood, disappeared into the next room, and returned with the father’s belongings.

“You have passed every test,” he said.

And from that day on, the story of the son who proved his wisdom not by claiming it—but by demonstrating it—was passed from town to town, like a fine inheritance of its own.



## Suggestion



A Roman officer once approached a Jewish rabbi with a smirk of condescension.

“I’ve heard that you Jews consider your rabbis to be exceedingly wise,” he sneered. “If that’s true, tell me—what dream will I have tonight?”

The rabbi answered without hesitation:

“You will dream that Persian forces launch a surprise attack on Rome.

That they crush your legions, conquer the city, and reduce Romans to slaves—forced to carry out the very tasks they most despise.”

The officer laughed, waved him off, and departed.

But early the next morning, he returned—his face pale, his voice unsteady.

“How… how did you know what I would dream?”

In that era, Persia was Rome’s most formidable enemy.

The rabbi had understood the soldier’s deepest fear.

The soldier, however, had not understood the power of suggestion—

nor how easily the mind receives what the heart dreads.

He had no idea that the rabbi had spoken not prophecy… but seed.

## The Rabbi's Pantomime



Once, the Emperor of Rome and the greatest Rabbi of Israel shared a rare and profound friendship. Their bond ran deep, even down to sharing the same birthday. Whenever the Emperor found himself facing a dilemma, he would quietly seek the Rabbi's counsel—trusting in his unmatched wisdom.

But as tensions between their nations worsened, their friendship could no longer be expressed openly. It became dangerous—for both—to be seen exchanging words. And so, the Emperor began to send emissaries, hoping to receive guidance through indirect means.

One day, the Emperor sent a messenger to the Rabbi with a message:

“There are two wishes I dearly hold.

First, that my son succeed me as Emperor upon my death.

Second, that the city of Tiberias in Israel be made a tax-free zone.

Yet I find I can only accomplish one.

Tell me, how might I secure them both?”

The Rabbi knew that any spoken response—should it be discovered—could damage the public perception of loyalty and ignite suspicion or political unrest. Thus, he chose silence.

When the messenger returned, the Emperor asked,

“Did the Rabbi say anything?”

“No,” the messenger replied, “not a word. But he lifted his son upon his shoulders, placed a dove in the boy’s hands, and the boy released it into the sky.”

The Emperor smiled.

He understood perfectly:

Pass the crown to your son now—and let him be the one to grant Tiberias its freedom later.

Sometime later, another messenger arrived with a second question:

“There are those among my officials who conspire against me.

How should I deal with them?”

Again, the Rabbi uttered no reply. Instead, he led the messenger into his garden. There, in silence, he pulled a cabbage from the earth and tossed it aside. He walked away. Then he returned, pulled another cabbage, and cast it away. Again, and again—until three cabbages lay on the ground. Then he said no more.

The message was clear to the Emperor:

Do not attempt to uproot all traitors at once.

Remove them carefully, deliberately—one by one.

Sometimes, wisdom speaks loudest in silence.

And the greatest leaders know how to listen—without needing to hear.

## Rabbi Hillel's Tuition



Over two thousand years ago, Rabbi Hillel was born in Babylon. At the age of twenty, driven by a fervent desire for knowledge, he journeyed to Israel and studied under two of the greatest rabbis of his time.

It was a harsh era—Israel's Jewish people suffered deeply under Roman rule. In such desperate times, it was almost impossible for a young man to afford tuition, let alone support himself with food and shelter. Yet, Rabbi Hillel's heart burned with a singular passion: to learn, to study no matter the cost.

Despite working tirelessly, Hillel could not raise the tuition fees. Denied entry to the classroom, he wandered the school grounds with a heavy heart. One day, he noticed smoke rising from the chimney atop the classroom roof. Hope stirred within him. Quietly, he climbed up and pressed his ear against the chimney.

There, faint but clear, came the voice of the rabbi teaching inside.

Overjoyed, Hillel listened through the cold night, forgetting hunger and chill alike. But one winter night, exhausted beyond strength, he fell asleep right there. Snow began to fall gently, blanketing him like a cold, white shroud.

"Why is it so dark tonight? Is it the snow?"

A student peered up at the ceiling and saw a dark shape

blocking the skylight. Alarmed, the students rushed to the roof—and found Hillel, frozen and buried in snow.

They quickly brought him inside, wrapped him in warm blankets, and cared for him with tenderness. Thanks to their swift action, Hillel awoke safely.

Moved by his plight, the school waived his tuition. From that day forward, Jewish schools abolished tuition altogether—ensuring that no student would ever be denied learning due to poverty.

Since then, whenever someone complains about money keeping them from their dreams, Jewish people ask with a knowing smile:

“Are you poorer than Hillel?”

Rabbi Hillel left behind countless wise sayings. Many of his words even echoed in the teachings of Christ.

His life reminds us all: the thirst for knowledge must transcend hardship—and the greatest treasures come not from wealth, but from the courage to pursue wisdom against all odds.

## What the Thief Left Behind



The Roman Emperor once said to Rabbi Gamaliel,  
“Your God is a thief, isn’t He? They say He stole a rib  
from Adam while he was asleep.”

The rabbi’s daughter, sitting nearby, interrupted the  
conversation politely.

“Your Majesty, may I offer an answer to that question?”

The Emperor granted permission, and she began:

“Imagine a thief who steals a silver box but leaves behind  
a golden box instead.

What would Your Majesty think of such a thief?”

The Emperor smiled and replied,

“A thief like that would be most welcome indeed.”

She continued,

“Isn’t that exactly what happened to Adam?

God took a single rib, but left behind a woman.”

## The Essence of Jewish Learning



A heathen once approached Rabbi Hillel with a mocking challenge:

“Can you teach me the entirety of Jewish wisdom while I stand on one leg?”

Without missing a beat, Hillel replied calmly:

“Do not demand of others what you yourself cannot do.

That, my friend, is the essence of Jewish learning.

If you wish to know more, go home and study.”



## Who Is Truly Wealthy?



A luxurious cruise ship floated serenely upon the deep blue sea. On its deck, guests basked in the warm afternoon sun, lounging beneath large parasols, chatting leisurely. Nearly all aboard were wealthy—men and women who prized their fortunes above all else.

Amid this gathering of riches, one figure stood out like an odd brushstroke in a masterpiece: a solitary rabbi, quietly seated, gazing thoughtfully toward the horizon.

The wealthy guests whispered and laughed among themselves.

“What great fortune could a rabbi like him possibly have?” one scoffed, eyeing him up and down.

The rabbi smiled calmly and answered,

“I might just be the richest person here. It pains me only that I cannot show you my wealth at this very moment.”

At that very instant, pirates attacked the ship. They ransacked the passengers, stripping them bare of all their gold, jewels, and treasures. The once opulent ship was left empty and adrift, ultimately crashing upon the shores of an unknown harbor.

The wealthy passengers were reduced to utter poverty, bewildered and helpless—unsure how they might repair the ship and return home. But the rabbi, whose knowledge and wisdom remained intact, soon earned respect in the new

town. He gathered students and began teaching.

One of the formerly wealthy men, humbled and repentant, approached him and said,

“Rabbi, you were right. True wealth is the treasure of the mind and spirit—things no thief can steal.”

## Think Before You Complain



When God first created the birds, they had no wings. One day, a bird complained to God:

“The snake has poison, the lion sharp teeth, the horse strong hooves—but I have nothing. How am I to protect myself?”

God granted the bird feathers and wings. But soon after, the bird returned, grumbling again:

“You gave me wings and feathers, but I don’t know what good they are. They feel like a heavy burden. I can’t even run as fast as before.”

God replied gently,

“Perhaps you should think deeply about how to use the wings attached to your body.”

## Guardians of the City



Three great rabbis traveled across the land, observing the state of the cities they visited.

Upon arriving in Palestine, they expressed a wish to meet the city's protector. Soon, the military commander came to greet them.

The rabbis said,

“Armies do not truly guard a city—they destroy it.

The true guardians are the teachers.

Therefore, you should fear your teachers as you fear God.”

## Reward for Knowledge



There was a boy who disliked studying. No matter how much his father and teacher tried, the boy's knowledge never advanced beyond the book of Genesis.

One day, the boy was caught committing a wrongdoing and thrown into prison. At that time, Julius Caesar visited the jail and ordered that all the books be brought to him. As he skimmed through the collection, he found a book written in Hebrew. Curious, he asked,

“Is there anyone here who can read this book?”

The prison warden remembered the recently captured Jewish boy and promptly brought him before Caesar, dressed in clean clothes. The Emperor tossed the book toward the boy and commanded him to read.

The boy read aloud up to the passage,

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”

Impressed, Caesar ordered that the boy be returned to his father as a reward for his reading, then left the prison.

Upon hearing this, a wise man remarked,

“Though the boy studied only one book, God bestowed great reward upon him.

Imagine the blessings if he were to study the entire Scriptures, with its commentaries and legends!”

## When to Study



When Rabbi Akiva turned forty, his wife urged him to go to Jerusalem and pursue his studies.

“But I am already forty,” Akiva protested. “My mind will slow down, and people will only laugh at me.”

Undeterred, his wife brought a donkey with a wounded back. She carefully treated the donkey with herbal remedies, a sight so comical it drew laughter from all who saw it. Together, they led the donkey to the market, where people laughed loudly at the spectacle.

The next day, the laughter subsided. By the third day, no one laughed at all.

Then his wife said,

“Now is the time for you to study. People may mock you at first, but tomorrow they will not laugh—and the day after, they will respect you.”

If you think there is a right time to learn, look to Rabbi Akiva, who began studying at forty and went on to achieve greatness.

## David and the Mosquito



King David resolved to sneak into the enemy commander's chamber and steal his sword.

"Here lies your sword," he planned to say, holding it up to strike fear into his foe.

"Had I wished to kill you, you would already be dead."

His strategy was to intimidate the enemy without a fight and force a surrender.

David crept into the chamber, but the commander lay fast asleep, clutching his sword tightly with both feet. Pulling it forcibly would surely wake him. David felt trapped and frustrated.

Just then, a mosquito landed on the commander's foot and began to suck his blood. The commander stirred instinctively, shifting his foot.

Seizing the moment, David swiftly snatched the sword and slipped away from the enemy camp.



## David and the Spider



King David had always despised spiders—disgusted by their sticky webs built anywhere and everywhere, considering them dirty, repulsive, and utterly useless creatures.

Near the end of a fierce battle, David's army was defeated and scattered. He found himself surrounded and pursued by enemies. Desperately fleeing, he became lost in a dense forest. Unable to find his way, the hostile shouts of his pursuers echoed all around him.

With no other choice, he hid inside a small cave. If the enemy discovered him there, it would be the end. Yet, trapped and surrounded, there was nowhere else to run.

At the cave's entrance, a spider was busily weaving its web. Under normal circumstances, David would have swatted the spider away without hesitation. But now, he had no time or care for such trivial matters.

Soon, the enemy soldiers arrived, searching the forest. Standing at the cave's mouth, one remarked,

"Look, the spider's web is still intact. No one's been in this cave for ages. Let's give up the chase and move on before we waste more time."

## The Emperor's New Island



There once was a kind and generous wealthy man who freed his slaves, loaded their ships with provisions, and bade them,

“Go forth to a place where happiness awaits you.”

One of these freed slaves set sail with hopeful dreams toward the unknown. But suddenly, a fierce storm arose, swallowing his ship whole. When the nightmare ended, he found himself washed ashore on a small island—bare and alone.

Though grateful to have survived the tempest, the weight of losing everything was overwhelming. Then, voices approached. He turned to see the island's inhabitants running toward him, shouting,

“Long live the Emperor!”

Confused beyond belief, the slave-turned-king clutched a passerby and asked,

“How is this possible? I came here naked and penniless. How can I suddenly be an emperor?”

The man smiled knowingly.

“We are not living men, but spirits. Once a year, a living human is brought to this island to reign as king. After one year, they are sent to the Isle of Death.”

He pointed toward a desolate, desert-like island afar.

Determined to prepare for the inevitable, the emperor

began tending to that barren isle—planting flowers, cultivating fruit trees, and nurturing the land.

A year passed. The emperor was cast from his throne and sent, naked as before, to the Isle of Death.

Yet, the once desolate isle had transformed into a thriving paradise, abundant with fruit and life. Welcomed warmly by the spirits who awaited him there, he lived in peace and joy.

In this parable, the wealthy man is God, the slave is the human soul, the first island represents the earthly life, the island's inhabitants symbolize humanity, the Isle of Death stands for the afterlife, and the blossoms and fruits are the fruits of righteous deeds.

## Happiness Depends on How You Think



It was a scorching summer day. A woodcutter had been working since morning. Maybe because of the heat, he felt unusually exhausted that day. He put his axe down and lay flat on the ground, letting out a sigh.

“What was a person like me even born for? Every day is just endless hardship. I work like a slave all day but can barely get a dry piece of bread to eat. Meanwhile, merchants lounge around in fine clothes, flashing shiny gold coins. What’s the use of my life?”

Before he knew it, the woodcutter had fallen asleep.

A young man, as beautiful as a star, appeared before him.

“God heard your sighs and sent me here to grant you one wish.”

Without hesitation, the woodcutter said,

“Please make everything I touch turn to gold.”

“It shall be so,” said the young man with a shrug, then disappeared.

The woodcutter woke up and sat up. It had been just a dream—what a pity! But still, hoping it might be true, he reached out and touched a log. The log instantly turned into shining gold. Jumping up, he grabbed a leaf, which also turned into beautiful gold.

He shouted joyfully,

“Now I’m rich! The richest man in the world! Even trash turns to gold when I touch it. I’ll build the most magnificent house and live proudly. I’ll buy my children only the finest things.”

He ran gleefully through the forest, and everywhere he went, the forest turned into gold.

After some time, his excitement calmed down. Not realizing how hot it was in the heat, he had run so much that he was parched with thirst. He went back to where he had been chopping wood and found his water bottle. But when he opened it, the water had turned into gold too.

He cried out in despair,

“What is this? Is this a blessing or a curse? If everything I touch turns to gold, then what can I eat or drink? What use is all this money if I starve to death?”

The woodcutter sat down again—and had fallen asleep once more. Carefully, he picked up the water bottle next to him and opened the lid. The water was still there. He drank it. It was the most delicious water he had ever tasted in his life.

He felt as if he had died and come back to life. He quickly got up, gathered firewood onto his shoulder, and headed to the market. He resolved in his heart never to blame poverty again and to work hard.

Desire is like a spider’s web at first—thin and delicate. But later, it thickens like a rope that ties you down. Desire may start as an awkward stranger but eventually becomes the proud master of the house.

## The Fox and the Fish



A fox was passing by a stream when it saw fish swimming hurriedly. It asked,

“Why are you swimming so fast?”

“To avoid getting caught in the nets set by humans,” the fish replied.

“Then come out here onto the land. I will protect you,” said the fox.

“But I’ve heard that foxes are clever, yet that’s not true. We’ve lived in the water all our lives and are trembling with fear even here. How can we know what will happen if we go up onto the land?”

Rabbi Akiva said,

“To the Jewish people, learning is like water to fish. Just as fish would die if they leave the water and climb a hill, Jewish people must learn by any means to survive.”

## The Parrot's Advice



There was a pet parrot who could talk like a human. The princess, who owned the parrot, would visit it every morning and stand by its cage to chat. One morning, after the princess left, the parrot muttered to itself,

“You may enjoy chatting, but I don’t. Ah, how wonderful it would be if I could just fly up to the sky.”

One day, the parrot overheard the princess ordering a servant to go to a neighboring country to buy perfume. Waiting until the servant passed by the cage, the parrot whispered,

“I have a favor to ask. If you meet any parrots during your journey, please greet them for me — they might be my relatives. Also, please tell them how miserable I am, trapped inside this cage.”

Feeling sympathy for the captive parrot, the servant promised to do so.

While traveling to the neighboring country, the servant saw a flock of parrots flying in the sky that looked just like the princess’s parrot. He called out loudly to them and relayed the parrot’s message.

Then one of the birds landed on his knee. The servant was overjoyed and stroked the bird gently. But the bird seemed dead; it did not respond at all. Disappointed, the servant threw the bird away.



Suddenly, the bird spread its wings wide and flew high into the sky.

When the servant returned to the palace, he told the parrot in detail about the strange incident. The parrot listened without much reaction.

The next morning, the princess came to the parrot's cage and found the parrot dead. She was angry that the parrot had died without her permission and shouted at the servant to throw the parrot outside.

When the servant threw the parrot out, it spread its wings and flew high into the sky.

Only then did the servant realize the true meaning of the parrot's strange advice.

## Worry, but in a Different Way



A rabbi, well known as an excellent merchant, misjudged a situation and risked losing all his wealth overnight by investing everything in a business venture. When his disciples heard the rumor, they rushed to comfort their teacher.

To their surprise, the rabbi was quietly absorbed in his usual studies, calm as ever. The disciples asked,

“Honored Rabbi, are you alright? We thought you would be very worried.”

The rabbi answered calmly,

“As you know, God has blessed me with a quick mind. What others would worry about for a month, I can handle in just one hour.”

Who is a wise person?

One who seeks to learn from everything.

Who is a strong person?

One who masters self-control.

Who is a rich person?

One who is content with what they have.

## Levels of Tzedakah (Charity)



1. Helping the recipient become self-sufficient.
2. Giving without the giver and recipient knowing each other.
3. Giving while knowing the identity of the recipient (recipient does not know the giver).
4. Giving without knowing the recipient's identity (recipient knows the giver).
5. Giving before being asked.
6. Giving after being asked.
8. 7. Giving less than is appropriate, but doing so gladly.
9. Giving reluctantly and begrudgingly.

In the philosophy of charity according to the Talmud, tzedakah is not an act of generosity but a duty. Refusing to give tzedakah to someone who has absolutely no way to support themselves is considered a violation, like ignoring someone who is bleeding. Some kinds of tzedakah are more virtuous than others. It is the intention and heart behind the gift that matters more than the amount given.

## The Power of Charity



A man who had lived selfishly all his life was lying sick, waiting for the day of his death. He told his family,

“I want to eat a boiled egg.”

When his family brought him a boiled egg, a beggar came asking for food.

The man, facing his final moments, told his family to give the food prepared for him to the beggar instead.

Three days later, the man passed away.

After the funeral, the man appeared before his son.

Startled, the son listened as the man said,

“Live your life giving charity generously. When I look back, the only charity I ever gave was that one boiled egg to the beggar before I died. But because of that one act, all the sins I committed were forgiven.”

## Four Attitudes Toward Charity



### 1. The Jealous Person

They give charity themselves but do not rejoice when others give charity just like them.

### 2. The Selfish Person

They wish for others to give charity but do not want to give charity themselves.

### 3. The Good Person

They willingly give charity themselves and also hope that others give charity.

### 4. The Evil Person

They neither give charity themselves nor like it when others do.

## The Living Sea



In Israel, near the Jordan River, there are two very large lakes. One is the Dead Sea, and the other is called the "Living Sea" in Hebrew. The Dead Sea, also known as the Sea of Death, receives water from other places but lets none flow out. On the other hand, the Living Sea has water coming in and water flowing out.

Not giving charity is like the Dead Sea. But when you give charity, it is like the Living Sea—water comes in and then flows out again. We must become like the Living Sea.

## Rabbi Hillel's Good Deed



One day, Rabbi Hillel was walking quickly down the street. Some students saw him and ran up to ask,

“Teacher, where are you rushing off to?”

“I am going to do a good deed,” he replied.

Curious about what he was doing, the students followed him and saw that Hillel was entering a public bathhouse.

Surprised, they asked again,

“Teacher, is bathing considered a good deed?”

“Keeping one’s body clean is indeed a great good deed,” Hillel explained. “Look at the Romans over there. They carefully sweep and polish countless statues, cherishing them. But more important than polishing statues is to keep one’s own body clean—that is the true act of kindness.”

## Kindness



In a Jewish street somewhere in Europe lived a highly respected rabbi. One day, the rabbi's son said to his father,

"I want to meet the sages or saints mentioned in the Scriptures."

The son believed the legend that ancient people come back to earth for a few days each year. The rabbi replied,

"If you live a pious life, you will be able to meet them."

The son zealously practiced righteous living. Half a year passed, but nothing happened.

"Be patient. Just because you acted righteously in the morning doesn't mean you'll meet Moses by evening," said his father.

Believing his father was right, the son waited.

Finally, a year passed.

One day, the son was alone guarding the synagogue when a beggar in rags came and asked for shelter for the night. The son scolded him harshly,

"Do you know where this is? It's not a hotel or a restaurant—it's a sacred synagogue! How dare a beggar like you ask to stay here?"

The beggar then begged, "Then at least please give me a little something to eat," but the son cruelly drove him away.

That evening, the rabbi asked his son as usual,

"How was your day?"



The son recounted how he had harshly chased away the impudent beggar who dared ask for shelter in the synagogue.

The rabbi looked up to the sky and sighed,

“That man was the very sage from the Scriptures you have been waiting for.”

The son, embarrassed and regretful, asked,

“Ah! Then must I live my whole life regretting what I did today?”

The rabbi replied,

“No, not necessarily. He will surely come again. But no one knows when or in what form he will come.”

Showing kindness to strangers is like showing kindness to angels. When Jews meet someone poorer than themselves, they invite them home and share a meal. They know well that such kindness becomes a lamp of hope that will one day light the future.

## Conditioned Reflex



Two explorers were climbing the north face of the Eiger. It is 1,800 meters high, made of ice, snow, and rock, and known as the deadliest of the three great north faces in the Alps.

They pushed themselves with all their strength, slowly making their way toward the summit. But the terrain was so steep and treacherous. Suddenly, the climber above slipped, causing the one below to fall off the cliff as well.

Fortunately, their rope caught on the edge of a rock, leaving both men hanging in midair, awaiting rescue.

A Swiss rescue helicopter arrived and, through a loudspeaker, encouraged them,

“This is the Red Cross rescue team.”

The two climbers answered in unison,

“We’ve already donated.”

## The Value of Good Deeds



Two men were walking down the road when they came upon a blind beggar sitting at a street corner. One of the men took a coin from his pocket and gave it to the beggar, while the other pretended not to see him and passed by.

After turning the corner, the Angel of Death appeared before them.

“To the man who gave a coin to the poor beggar, you will have to fear me for another fifty years. But to the man who passed by without giving, there is no need to fear me anymore — you will soon die.”

The man who did not give the coin panicked and said,

“I will go right now and give a coin to the beggar!”

The Angel of Death replied,

“Would you go out to sea and check if the bottom of your boat has a hole in it?”

## The Magic Apple



The king's only daughter was suffering from an unknown illness. They called every doctor and gave her all the best medicines, but the princess could not get up.

The king, desperate to find a cure, posted a proclamation all over the country:

"Whoever can cure the princess will marry her and become the heir to the throne."

Far away in the mountains lived three brothers. The eldest had a magic telescope that could see anything, the second had a magic carpet that could fly anywhere instantly, and the youngest had a magic apple that could cure any illness.

The eldest brother, looking through his magic telescope, spotted the proclamation and called his brothers loudly,

"The princess is sick!"

"If we cure her, we can marry her!"

The second brother shouted,

"If we marry the princess, we become king!"

The youngest shouted back.

The three brothers flew to the palace on the magic carpet. The youngest gave the princess the magic apple to eat, and she recovered completely as if washed clean. The king was moved to tears. The whole kingdom celebrated the princess's recovery.

"If it weren't for this telescope, we wouldn't even have known the princess was sick," said the eldest.

“If it weren’t for the magic carpet, how could we have come here so quickly?” said the second.

“But even so, without my apple, the princess’s illness wouldn’t have been cured!” said the youngest.

Finally, the king made a decision:

“The eldest still has his magic telescope. The second still has his magic carpet. But the youngest has nothing left, because the princess ate the magic apple. He gave everything he had. Therefore, he shall be the one to receive the reward.”

## The Fruit of the Tree



A traveler passing by saw an old man planting a sapling in his yard and asked,

“When do you think this tree will bear fruit?”

“In about seventy years,” the old man replied.

“Do you think you will still be alive then?” the traveler asked.

The old man smiled gently and said,

“Of course not. But when I was born, our yard was already full of all kinds of fruits. That’s because my grandfather planted the saplings long before I was born, for me. I am doing the same for those who come after me, just like my grandfather did.”

## The Blind Man's Lantern



It was a dark night without a moon. A man was walking cautiously when he saw a blind man coming toward him holding a lantern. Finding it strange, the man asked,

“Why are you carrying a lantern if you can’t see?”

The blind man replied,

“If I carry a lantern, people who can see will know that I am walking.”

## The Hole in the Boat



There was a man who owned a small boat. Every summer, he would take his family out on the boat to the lake to fish and enjoy the water.

That year, as summer was ending while they were having fun, he decided to pull the boat ashore to store it away. As he was doing so, he discovered a small hole in the bottom of the boat. But since summer was already over and the next one was still far off, he thought he would fix it when he had time, and put the boat away in the shed.

After that, he completely forgot about the hole in the boat. Winter came, and he called a painter to repaint the boat.

The following summer came earlier than expected. His two children were eager to take the boat out on the lake immediately. With a word of caution, he let them launch the boat.

A few hours later, suddenly the thought of the hole in the boat struck him like a lightning bolt. The children were good at handling the boat but not strong swimmers.

Overcome with panic, he rushed outside. Just then, his two children were coming back, pulling the boat. He ran to embrace them, and a prayer spontaneously rose in his heart.

He checked the bottom of the boat. It was intact. Someone had carefully patched the hole.

Thinking it over, he realized it must have been the painter.



He had probably fixed the hole while painting the boat.

Grateful, he bought a gift and went to thank the painter.

“Why are you giving me this gift when you were already paid to paint the boat?” the painter asked.

“You fixed the hole in the boat, didn’t you? I had planned to repair it before using the boat again this year but completely forgot. Thanks to you fixing it without being asked, you saved my children’s lives.”

People who take pride in their work do what needs to be done without being told. Recognizing and appreciating that is something ordinary people often fail to do.

## What You Give Comes Back



Near Jerusalem, there was a very large farm. The owner was a farmer deeply interested in charity, and every year rabbis would visit his farm and gratefully receive his generous donations.

One day, a tremendous typhoon swept through the area, completely destroying his farm. The land was left unrecognizable, and the livestock were either washed away by floods or died from disease. Faced with this crisis, his creditors seized all his assets.

Now, only a small piece of land remained to him. Yet he calmly said,

“Whatever God has given, He has the right to take back!”

That year too, the rabbis came to visit. They were shocked to see how the grand farm had fallen apart. Still, the farmer thought he could not let the rabbis leave empty-handed.

So he sold half of the small remaining land and donated the proceeds to the rabbis. The rabbis were very surprised by this unexpected gift.

Now the farmer worked even harder on the remaining half of his land. One day, while plowing, his ox slipped and fell into the mud. The only possessions he had left were that small piece of land and the ox.

He struggled to pull the ox out of the mud, and to his surprise, treasures were hanging from the ox’s feet. Digging

through the mud, he found a buried treasure chest. The farmer became far richer than before.

The next year, when the rabbis came back, their hearts were heavy on the way. They worried how he managed to live on just that small half piece of land, and what he would do if he sold half of it again.

But the farmer was wealthy again. He welcomed the rabbis and explained what had happened over the past year. Smiling, he said that when you give generously, it always comes back to you.

Are you doing what you are meant to do? This question is crucial because the only purpose you have in this world is to faithfully carry out the work entrusted to you by the One who granted you this short life.

## The Uninvited Guest



After the destruction of the Second Temple, Gamaliel II said,

“We need to establish the laws, so let seven scholars gather at the synagogue tomorrow morning.”

The next morning, when Gamaliel II arrived at the synagogue, eight people were already there. Among them was someone who had not been invited. However, since no one knew who the eighth person was, Gamaliel said,

“Anyone who is not meant to be here, please leave.”

Then, the person who everyone thought should be there stood up and said,

“I am the uninvited one. As a scholar who has studied the law, I wanted to participate.”

In truth, the uninvited person was someone else. But he spoke first so that the person who had come by mistake would not feel humiliated.

## Visiting the Sick



When Rabbi Akiva heard that his student was ill, he immediately set out to visit him. Upon hearing that his teacher was coming, the student got up despite his sickness and began to sweep the yard and sprinkle water to prevent dust from rising.

Perhaps this counted as exercise, because gradually his condition seemed to improve. By evening, the student had fully regained his strength. He bowed deeply before his teacher and said,

“Teacher, you have saved my life.”

After returning from the visit, the rabbi said to his disciples,

“He who does not visit the sick is like a murderer. Visiting the sick hastens their recovery.”

## The Weight of Poverty



It was the night before the Sabbath. He was coming home later than usual, having been busy handling urgent matters. Near his house, a man in shabby clothes begged him for some charity, saying he needed to prepare for the Sabbath. The man angrily scolded him, saying, “How can you say that now, when it’s already time to prepare food for the Sabbath? Don’t lie.”

When he got home and changed clothes, he told his wife what had just happened. His wife spoke with concern,

“I think you were wrong. You know how hard poverty is. When I was young, my father used to come home hurriedly at dusk carrying dry bread. That man was probably in the same situation.”

He hurried back outside, bought the man bread, fish, meat, and wine, and blessed him to have a good Sabbath. Then he asked for forgiveness for his earlier behavior.

Repentance purifies one’s soul and prepares one for a good life. Repent while you still have strength. You must pour oil into the lamp before the flame goes out.

## A Joke



An elderly Jewish woman was crossing a shaky suspension bridge alone. When she was about halfway across, a strong wind began to blow fiercely, causing the bridge to sway dangerously. Clinging tightly to the railing, she shouted,

“God, if You let me cross this bridge safely, I will donate half of my fortune.”

As if by magic, the wind suddenly stopped. Trembling, she continued and almost reached the other side.

“I’m almost there. But donating half my fortune seems a bit too much. God, I take back what I said earlier.”

Then the wind picked up fiercely again, as if to overturn the bridge. Screaming, she cried out,

“I was joking, joking! God takes jokes too seriously!”

God sees everything. But we cannot see God. Likewise, the mind sees everything invisible to our eyes.

## The Wisest Choice



One day, three wise men were walking together. At a street corner, they found a suspicious sack. Opening it, they discovered it was full of gold coins. The wise men agreed that whoever could say the most clever and admirable thing about how to use the money for God would take all the coins.

The first wise man said,

“I will draw a line on the ground and then toss the gold coins into the air. The coins that fall to the right of the line will be offered to God, and those on the left I will keep for myself.”

The second wise man smiled and said,

“I will draw a circle on the ground and toss the coins up as well. The coins that fall inside the circle will be for God, and those outside I will take for myself.”

The third wise man, a Jewish rabbi and teacher, said,

“You both are wise. But since God is omniscient and omnipotent, if I toss these coins into the air, He will take whatever He needs. So I will use all the coins that fall to the ground for this world.”



## Why the Rich Don't Help Others



“Rabbi, I really don’t understand. Poor people help each other as much as they can, but why do rich people, despite having so much money, not help others?”

A man asked the rabbi with a sincere expression.

The rabbi led the man to the window.

“Look outside. What do you see?”

“I see a woman walking while holding a child’s hand. A few cars have passed by, and now one car is waiting at the signal.”

“Good. Now look at the mirror on the wall. What do you see?”

The man went to the mirror and looked at his reflection.

“I only see my own face.”

“That’s right. Both the window and the mirror are made of glass. But if you put a thin layer of silver on one side, it becomes a one-way mirror—you can only see yourself, not what’s outside.”

## The Poor Widow's Bread



In a small fishing village by the sea, there lived a poor widow who mended the fishermen's torn nets. One day, a long spell of bad weather kept the fishermen from going out to sea, and she too was left without work. With no bread to eat and starving, the widow gathered her courage and went to a wealthy household to beg.

"I haven't eaten anything for days. Please, share some bread with me," she pleaded.

The rich man replied, "Taking someone else's property for free is a sin. I don't want to be complicit in that sin."

"Then please lend me some bread," she asked.

"Those who borrow become slaves to the lender. I don't want to make you a slave," he answered.

"Then do you think it's okay for me to starve to death? Would God be pleased with that?"

"No, but taking what has no owner is not a sin. Go to my warehouse and gather the flour spilled on the floor."

The widow entered the warehouse as guided and found piles of flour scattered on the floor. She carefully collected the flour and brought it home, where she baked three large loaves of bread.

Just as she was about to eat the steaming fresh bread, someone urgently knocked on her door.

"Please, I beg you, give me something to eat. I haven't

eaten for three days,” said the man outside.

Feeling pity, she gave him one loaf. He took the bread and disappeared into the darkness. She felt joy and gratitude that she was able to share bread with someone else.

Soon after, there was another urgent knock.

“Please save me, I’m starving to death,” said a man who had barely escaped a bandit attack.

She gave him the second loaf. The man took it and vanished into the night. Once more, she prayed with gratitude, happy for her good deed.

But just as she reached for the last loaf, a violent storm swept through, tearing off the roof of her hut and carrying away her final loaf.

The next morning, the widow sat staring at the quiet sea, deeply troubled. She could not understand why, when God promised to care for widows and orphans, the last loaf was taken away by the wind, unlike the first two loaves which she had freely given to those in need.

Determined to seek justice, she went to King Solomon and pleaded her case against the wind.

As she left the palace, three Arab merchants came forward before King Solomon. They had been crossing the sea laden with precious goods when a storm struck, threatening to sink their ship through a hole letting water in. After praying in vain, they finally called on the God of Israel to save them, promising to dedicate their treasures in thanks.

Suddenly, something flew from the sky and plugged the hole in the ship’s bottom, calming the fierce storm.

The merchants presented their treasures to King Solomon

and said,

“This is the item that flew down to plug the hole. Please tell us where to dedicate this treasure to fulfill our vow.”

The king immediately summoned the widow. She carefully examined the bread and confirmed it was the bread she had baked.

“This treasure is all yours,” said the king. “God has rewarded your kindness in this way.”

## The Eternally Dirty Cookie



A wealthy miser bought a single cookie to eat on his way home. But while walking, he accidentally dropped it, and it got covered in mud. Just then, a beggar came by asking for alms. The miser gave the dirty cookie to the beggar.

That night, the miser had a dream.

He found himself sitting in a crowded teahouse filled with people. Waiters were bustling about, serving fragrant cookies and tea. But no one came to his table. After waiting anxiously for a long time, a waiter finally approached and placed a dirty cookie before him.

“Is this what you’re serving me? Do you think I’m a beggar?” the miser shouted.

The waiter turned back and said,

“This is the eternal teahouse. Here, you can only order what you have sent from the world of time beforehand. This cookie is the only thing you sent.”

Fear God as if you are afraid of others. Do you fear that others may know your sins and have no fear of God?

## Generosity That Even Makes a Swindler Humble



A kind and understanding rabbi was approached by a man whose wife was ill and who had no money for treatment. He asked the rabbi for 10 rubles.

The rabbi, having no cash on hand, gave the man a silver candlestick and said,

“Take this and pawn it for 10 rubles. I will come and redeem it later.”

Some time later, the rabbi went to the pawnshop to retrieve the candlestick, only to find out that the man had taken 20 rubles instead.

“Rabbi, that man is a swindler! You must catch him and make him pay back,” the pawnbroker said indignantly.

But the rabbi replied,

“No, this unfortunate man is very humble and thoughtful. Even though he needed 20 rubles, he didn’t have the courage to ask me for more than 10.”

## What Is Success?



The rabbi ran alongside a man who was rushing down the road and asked,

"Why are you in such a hurry?"

"I'm trying to get ahead quickly so I can succeed," the man replied without stopping.

Still running beside him, the rabbi said,

"How do you know that success lies ahead of you?"

What if success is actually behind you, waiting for you to stop?"

To modern people who are always running forward, the Talmud gently asks:

"Why are you in such a hurry?"

## The Five Kinds of People



A ship full of people was caught in a sudden storm and thrown off course. Amid blinding darkness, thunder roared and lightning flashed without end. When morning came, the sea had calmed, and the ship had drifted to an unknown island.

Exhausted from the storm, the passengers decided to anchor and rest for a while.

The island was beautiful—full of blooming flowers, fruit-laden trees, and birds singing joyfully in the trees.

People reacted in five different ways:

The first group stayed on the ship, afraid that it might leave without them. No matter how beautiful the island, arriving at their true destination was more important.

The second group hurried ashore, smelled the fragrant flowers, rested under shady trees, and ate delicious fruit. Once they had regained their strength, they returned to the ship promptly.

The third group became intoxicated by the island's beauty, wandered too long, and returned in a rush—having lost their belongings and the good seats they once had on the ship.

The fourth group believed the captain would never leave without them. But when they finally heard the departure horn, they panicked and ran—cut and bruised by rocks and thorns. The wounds they sustained never fully healed, even



after the journey resumed.

The fifth group indulged too deeply. They went far into the island, gorged themselves on fruit, and didn't even hear the ship's departure. Left behind, they were either eaten by wild beasts or poisoned by the very fruit they thought so sweet.

Which group do you belong to?

In this story, the ship represents good deeds, and the island symbolizes worldly pleasure.

The first group refused to enjoy any pleasure at all in life.

The second group enjoyed a little, but never forgot their true destination—these are the wisest.

The third group returned, but not without trouble.

The fourth group made it back too late and carried their wounds all the way to the end.

And the fifth group—as so many humans do—lost themselves in vanity and indulgence, never realizing the sweetness they chased was laced with poison.

## The Four Types of People



### 1. The Most Common Type

"What's mine is mine, and what's yours is yours."

### 2. The Strange Type

"What's mine is yours, and what's yours is mine."

### 3. The Righteous Type

"What's mine is yours, and what's yours is yours too."

### 4. The Wicked Type

"What's mine is mine, and what's yours is also mine."

## The Four Types of Temperament



1. Quick to anger and quick to calm down  
What they gain is about the same as what they lose.

2. Slow to anger but also slow to calm down  
What they lose is about the same as what they gain.

3. Slow to anger and quick to calm down  
Such a person is called a sage.

4. Quick to anger and slow to calm down  
Such a person is called wicked.

To truly understand someone's character, observe three things: how they drink, how they spend money, and how they express anger.

## Three Types of People Who Listen to the Words of the Wise



### 1. The Sponge

Absorbs everything indiscriminately, without discernment.

### 2. The Tunnel

What enters through one ear exits immediately through the other.

### 3. The Sieve

Filters what is important from what is not, retaining only what is truly valuable.

## Four Types of Students



1. The Fast Learner Who Quickly Forgets  
What is gained is soon lost; the benefit is fleeting.

2. The Slow Learner Who Forgets Slowly  
Though progress is gradual, knowledge remains; gain and loss are balanced.

3. The Fast Learner Who Forgets Slowly  
This is the truly wise and capable student.

4. The Slow Learner Who Quickly Forgets  
This, alas, is the most unfortunate type of student.

## Seven Qualities of a Wise Person



1. Remains silent in the presence of someone wiser.
2. Does not interrupt when others are speaking.
3. Responds without confusion or hesitation.
4. Asks thoughtful questions and gives clear, coherent answers.
5. Prioritizes tasks wisely—addressing what must be done first, and deferring what can wait.
6. Admits when they do not know something.
7. Acknowledges the truth, even when it is difficult.

## Four Types of People to Avoid at All Costs



1. An arrogant poor man
2. A wealthy person who craves flattery
3. A lecherous old man
4. A leader who abuses power at will

Also beware of those who are quick to anger, overly concerned with appearance, proud, constantly seeking praise, or deeply jealous.

Such people are not truly sincere—any humility or virtue they display is merely a façade.

## The Fox and the Grapes



A hungry fox was wandering near a vineyard, looking for a way through the fence. Inside, luscious grapes hung heavily from the vines, and the breeze carried their sweet aroma. Having gone three days without food, the fox had grown thin enough to squeeze through a narrow gap in the fence.

Once inside, he devoured the grapes—one after another, as many as he could eat. At last, full and satisfied, he patted his swollen belly and turned to go home. But then he realized, with a start: he was too fat to get out.

The fox had no choice but to fast for another three days. Only when he had become thin again could he squeeze back out through the fence. As he dragged himself away, weak and weary, he muttered:

"What was the point of eating those grapes at all? In the end, I'm just as hungry as I was before I went in!"

So it is with life. Every person enters the world with clenched fists, as if ready to grasp it all. Yet when we leave, our hands are open and empty. What we take with us in the end is not wealth or power, but the good we have done.



## Good and Evil



A great flood was sweeping across the Earth. As torrential rain poured from the heavens, animals of every kind rushed—two by two—toward Noah's Ark.

Good came running, breathless and alone.

"I can only allow those who come in pairs," Noah said firmly.

With no choice, Good turned back and wandered into the forest—one of the few places still untouched by the rising waters—to find a partner.

At last, Good found Evil, roaming alone among the trees.

Together, they returned to the Ark.

And from that day on, wherever Good is found, Evil is never far behind.

## Satan's Gift



Noah was planting a vineyard when Satan appeared.

“What are you planting?” Satan asked.

“It’s a grapevine. Its fruit is sweet and fragrant. And when you press its juice to make wine, you’ll know true happiness,” Noah answered proudly.

“Is that so? Then let me join you.”

“Very well,” Noah agreed.

Satan then brought sheep, lions, pigs, and monkeys. One by one, he slaughtered them and sprinkled their blood over the vineyard. The ground soaked up their blood completely.

Wine, when first tasted, is gentle like a sheep. Drink a little more, and it turns fierce like a lion. Drink further, and you become like a pig, rolling in filth. Drink excessively, and you dance like a monkey, babbling ugly words.

This is the gift the devil gave to mankind.

## The Jewels Entrusted by God



While Rabbi Meyer was preaching at the synagogue on the Sabbath, his two children suddenly died at home. His wife moved their bodies to the upper floor, weeping bitterly as she covered them with a white cloth. When the rabbi returned, his wife asked him,

“I want to ask you something. A man entrusted me with very precious jewels to keep safe, but one day he suddenly appeared and demanded his jewels back. What should I do?”

Without hesitation, the rabbi replied firmly,

“Return them immediately to their owner.”

Only then did his wife say,

“In fact, just now God has come to take back the two precious jewels He had entrusted to us.”

The rabbi understood the meaning and said nothing.

## Why the Great Rabbi Wept



There was a noble, kind, and infinitely compassionate great rabbi, deeply respected by all.

One day, after passing the age of eighty, he realized his body was weakening and that his time to die was near. As his disciples gathered by his bedside, he began to weep.

They comforted him, saying,

“Master, why do you weep? You are the most respected person in this land. Moreover, you have never once set foot in the dirty world of politics. There is nothing in this world worthy of your tears.”

The rabbi sighed and said,

“That is precisely why I weep. At the moment of death, when I ask myself, ‘Have you studied? Have you prayed to God? Have you given charity? Have you acted rightly?’ I can answer, ‘Yes!’ But when I ask myself, ‘Have you ever lived like an ordinary person?’ I can only answer, ‘No.’ And so I weep.”

## Therefore, There Is Hope



Rabbi Akiva was traveling with a donkey and a dog. He carried with him only a small bag containing a few belongings and a little lamp.

As evening fell, Akiva found an empty barn. Since it was still early, he lit the lamp and began to read a book. But the wind kept blowing out the lamp's flame, so he decided to go to sleep.

While he slept, a fox came and killed the dog, and then a lion appeared and killed the donkey.

In the morning, he set off alone, carrying only the lamp. As he neared a nearby village, there was no sign of life. The village had been raided by thieves during the night, and all the villagers had been killed.

Had the lamp's light not been extinguished by the wind, had the dog and donkey still been alive, he would have been discovered by the thieves.

In the end, by losing everything, he was spared and survived.

Never lose hope, even in the worst situations. Sometimes, bad events lead to good outcomes.

## The Most Important Part



The king of Persia fell ill and lay in bed.  
The doctor diagnosed that only a lioness's milk could cure him.

But how could anyone get the milk of a lioness? Everyone shook their heads in despair.

Then a man stepped forward and said,  
“If you give me ten sheep, I will surely bring back the milk of a lioness.”

He herded the sheep and went toward the lion's den.

There, the lioness was nursing her cubs.

He threw one sheep to the lioness and watched from afar.

The lioness quickly killed and ate the sheep.

Day by day, he came a little closer, throwing one sheep at a time.

After ten days, he had become close enough to stroke the lioness's fur and play with her cubs.

He succeeded in getting the lioness's milk.

On his way back to the palace, he fell asleep and dreamed that his body parts were arguing over who was the most important.

“My legs, without me, how could you have reached the lion's den?” said the legs.

“My eyes, without me guiding the way, you would go nowhere,” said the eyes.

“What nonsense! Without me, how could you have carried out such a plan? Give me credit!” said the heart.

“Even so, without me, you would never have started,” said the tongue.

“You’re just a little thing hiding in the dark inside the mouth without bones. How arrogant!”

All the body parts laughed and mocked the tongue together.

“You will soon learn how important I really am,” said the tongue firmly.

Awakening from the dream, the man hurried to the palace and presented the lioness’s milk to the king.

The king asked,

“What is this?”

The man, unable to help himself, shouted loudly,

“It’s dog’s milk!”

All the body parts, who had just mocked the tongue in unison, panicked and quickly apologized to it,

“We see now how powerful you are. We’re sorry.”

Then the tongue calmed down and said,

“Oh, that was just a slip of the tongue. This is the lioness’s milk, obtained after great difficulty.”

The more important something is, the more careful we must be—otherwise, absurd mistakes happen.

## The Mouth



One day, all the animals of the world gathered together in one place.

When the snake appeared, one of the animals asked,

“The lion kills its prey by bringing it down before eating it, and the wolf tears its prey apart to eat. But you, snake, you swallow your prey whole, which is quite terrifying. Why do you do that?”

The snake replied,

“I think swallowing whole is better than tearing apart. At least I do not hurt others with my mouth.”



## The Secret to Living Truly



A merchant was walking through the streets, shouting loudly,

“Is there anyone who wants to buy the secret to a true life?”

People from all over the town gathered, eager to purchase the secret. Among them were several rabbis. They all urged him to quickly reveal what it was.

The merchant said,

“The secret to living truly is to carefully watch how you use your tongue.”

## The Ugly Vessel



A rabbi, known as the wisest man of his time despite his unattractive appearance, was on his way to meet the Emperor of Rome when he encountered a princess. The princess immediately sneered,

“Oh my, such great wisdom in such an ugly vessel.”

The rabbi paid no mind to her insult and suddenly asked,

“Is there any wine in the palace?”

The princess nodded with a look that said, “Of course.”

The rabbi smiled gently and asked again,

“In what kind of vessel is the wine kept?”

“Usually in ordinary jars or wine bottles,” she replied dismissively.

Feigning surprise, the rabbi asked once more,

“Someone as noble as you, Princess, surely has many gold and silver vessels, yet you use common jars and bottles for your wine?”

Feeling embarrassed, the princess immediately ordered all the wine from the jars to be transferred into gold and silver vessels. But soon, the wine’s taste changed drastically.

The angry emperor shouted,

“Who dared move the wine?”

“I did...” the princess answered in a timid voice.

After being scolded by the emperor, the princess stormed to the rabbi’s residence and angrily shouted,

“Rabbi! Why did you do that? Was it to trick me?”

“I only wished to teach you that sometimes, even the most precious things are better kept in simple, humble vessels like jars,” the rabbi calmly replied.

## Sweet but Bitter



Rabbi Gamaliel summoned his servant and ordered him to go to the market and buy the most delicious thing. After a while, the servant returned holding a tongue. Then Rabbi Gamaliel asked the servant to go again and bring the most unpleasant, tasteless thing from the market. Soon after, the servant returned—again holding a tongue.

Rabbi Gamaliel asked,

“When I asked you to bring the most delicious thing, you brought a tongue. And now, when I asked for the most tasteless thing, you also brought a tongue. Why is that?”

The servant replied,

“Because the tongue is the sweetest thing in the world, and yet it can also be the most bitter.”

## The Banquet



One day, a king invited his servants to a grand banquet — but he gave no hint about when or where it would take place.

The wise servant thought to himself,

"Since it's the king's banquet, it could happen at any moment. I should be ready at all times, so I can go as soon as I'm called."

But the foolish servant thought,

"Oh, the banquet won't be anytime soon. There's so much to prepare — I'll have plenty of time once I get the invitation."

When the banquet finally began, the wise servant was ready. He arrived without delay and delighted in all the rich and wonderful dishes the king had prepared.

But by the time the foolish servant showed up, the doors were already closed — and there was no way in.

We must live ready for God's invitation, so that when the moment comes, we meet it not with fear or panic — but with joy.

## Body and Mind



There once was a king who had a special tree that bore the most delicious figs.

When the tree became heavy with fruit, the king assigned two guards to watch over it — one was blind, the other lame.

The lame man whispered to the blind man,

"Look at all those figs. Let's just take one — no one will even notice."

So the lame man climbed onto the blind man's shoulders, picked a fig, and they shared it.

But the fig was so sweet, so perfect, that they couldn't stop. In no time, they had devoured a great number of figs.

When the king discovered what had happened, he was furious and summoned them.

"How could I have picked any fruit?" said the lame man. "I can't even walk. I'm not guilty."

"And how could I have climbed a tree?" said the blind man. "I can't even see. I'm innocent too."

The king nodded, as if agreeing — then he placed the lame man on the blind man's shoulders and judged them as one.

We can do nothing with just the body.

We can do nothing with only the mind.

But when body and mind work together — for good or for evil — we are capable of anything.

## The True Mother



King Solomon was known far and wide for his great wisdom.

One day, two women came before him, bringing with them a single baby. Each claimed the child as her own and begged the king to decide between them.

Solomon questioned them in many ways, trying to uncover the truth — but he could not tell who the real mother was.

In ancient Jewish law, when ownership could not be determined, it was customary to divide the disputed item equally.

So at last, Solomon gave a shocking order:

"Bring me a sword. Cut the child in two and give each woman half."

At that moment, one of the women cried out in anguish.

"No, please! Don't harm the child. Let her have him instead. I'll say no more — just let him live."

Then Solomon turned to her and said,

"You are the true mother of the child."

## The Man Who Stole the Money



Three Jewish men once traveled to Jerusalem on the Sabbath.

Since there were no banks at the time, they buried their money together in a hidden place before entering the city.

But when they returned, the money was gone.

The next day, they went to King Solomon and asked him to judge who among them had stolen it.

"You are all known to be wise men," said Solomon.

"I have a difficult case before me — help me judge it. If you do, I will settle your dispute in return."

And so Solomon told them this story:

A young woman, already engaged to be married, fell in love with another man.

She went to her fiancé and said,

"I'm in love with someone else. I will pay you compensation if you'll agree to break off our engagement."

But the fiancé replied,

"I don't need compensation. If you no longer love me, I release you."

A few days later, an old man kidnapped the woman, hoping to demand a ransom.

But the woman said to him,

"My fiancé let me go freely, without asking for anything."



You must do the same.”

Moved by her words, the old man let her go without demanding a ransom.

Then Solomon asked,

“Which of the people in this story deserves the most praise?”

“The fiancé,” said the first man. “He gave her up without bitterness or greed.”

“No,” said the second. “The woman deserves the most praise. She bravely followed her heart and asked for what she truly wanted.”

“This whole story makes no sense,” said the third man.

“No one gives up money for nothing — not the fiancé, not the kidnapper. It’s completely unbelievable.”

At that, Solomon raised his voice and said,

“You are the one who stole the money! The other two saw the emotions, the relationships, the tension between people. But you saw only money — and that blinded you to everything else.”

## The Measure of Two Hours



In the king's vineyard, many workers labored under the sun.

Among them was one man who stood out — he was especially skilled and diligent in his work.

One day, the king himself visited the vineyard.

He noticed the talented worker and invited him to walk through the vines together.

As they strolled, they spoke at length about the care of the vineyard and the art of growing grapes.

According to Jewish tradition, wages are paid daily in coins.

That evening, when the day's work was done, the laborers lined up to receive their pay.

Each received the same amount — including the man who had only worked for two hours.

Outraged, the other workers protested:

“How can someone who worked just two hours receive the same wages as those of us who worked all day?”

The king replied,

“This man accomplished more in two hours than any of you did in an entire day.”

Likewise, a rabbi who died at the age of twenty-eight achieved more in his short life than others do in a hundred

years.

What matters is not how long we live —  
but how much we truly accomplish.

## True Gain



A group of rabbis were walking together when they came upon a band of wicked men — people so notorious that others whispered about them in fear.

“These men,” the whispers went, “rot a person from the inside out.”

There seemed to be no one in the world more cunning, more cruel, more devoid of conscience than they.

“I wish they’d all just drown and be gone from this world,” one rabbi muttered under his breath.

But the greatest among the rabbis gently replied,

“No, that is not the wish we should hold.

Rather than hoping they die, we should hope they repent. Let them turn from their ways and become people of good.”

Punishing the wicked may bring a moment’s satisfaction

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But it brings no true gain.

The real victory lies in helping them change... and making them part of the good.

## The Stolen Candlestick



A man once invited three guests to his home for dinner.

The evening was pleasant, the meal warm and generous — but after the guests had gone, the host discovered something troubling:

his most valuable candlestick had vanished.

It was a rare and treasured piece, so the next day, he gathered the three guests and brought them all to a rabbi for judgment.

The rabbi listened carefully, then paused in thought.

At last, he said,

“I have a special method for handling cases like this.

Let me use it now.”

He continued,

“I’ll place a candlestick on a table in the next room, and I’ll darken the room completely. Each of you will enter one at a time and touch the candlestick with your hands.”

The guests exchanged confused glances, unsure what to think.

The rabbi smiled gently and added,

“You may find this hard to believe — but the candlestick holds a strange power. If the thief touches it, a sharp shock will run through their body, like a bolt of lightning, and they’ll cry out in pain.”

He then stepped into the next room to prepare.

A few moments later, his voice called out that all was ready.

The host went in first — after all, it was possible his claim wasn't true. No sound.

Then the first guest entered. Silence.

The second guest. Silence again.

The third guest followed. Still, no reaction.

The rabbi turned on the light.

“Now,” he said, “please show me your hands.”

Each person held out their palms.

They were all smudged black —

All but one.

The rabbi had coated the candlestick with soot, suspecting that the guilty party, afraid of the candlestick's “power,” would never touch it at all.

And so, without a word of accusation, the truth revealed itself.

## God Tests the Righteous



Rabbi Yonatan once said,  
“A potter never taps on cracked pottery — it’s already flawed.

But when he has crafted something strong and beautiful, he tests it with his fingers to hear its true sound.

In the same way, God tests only those who are righteous.”

Rabbi Ben Hanina said,

“A linen merchant strikes only fine cloth. The more it is struck, the stronger and shinier it becomes.

Poor-quality linen would tear under pressure, so it is never tested.

God, too, tests only those who are worthy.”

And Rabbi Eleazar added,

“If a man owns two oxen — one strong, the other weak — which one will he yoke to the plow?

Of course, the strong one.

So it is with God:

He places the heavier burdens upon those He knows can carry them.”

## The Middle Path



An army was marching along a narrow road.  
To the right of the path lay snow and ice — a frozen,  
deadly wasteland.  
To the left was a sea of fire, fierce and consuming.  
If the army marched to the right, they would freeze to  
death.  
If they marched to the left, they would be burned alive.  
But the middle path offered a balance — a place where  
warmth and coolness met in harmony.



## The Lost Treasure



When a rabbi arrived in Rome, he noticed proclamations posted all over the city:

The Queen has lost a precious treasure.

Anyone who returns it within thirty days will receive a great reward.

Anyone found possessing it after thirty days will be put to death.

By chance, the rabbi came into possession of the treasure.

He kept it safe and waited — not returning it until the thirty-first day, when he brought it before the queen.

“Were you here when the proclamation was made, thirty days ago?” the queen asked.

“Yes, I was,” the rabbi replied.

“And how long have you had this treasure?”

“For quite some time,” he answered.

“Then you know the punishment for bringing it after thirty days?”

“Yes, I know,” he said calmly.

“Then why did you wait until today? If you had returned it yesterday, you would have received the great reward. Wasn’t your life worth more than that?”

The rabbi looked at her steadily and said,

“If I had returned it within thirty days, people would think I feared or simply respected the queen.

But by waiting until now, I want everyone to know — I do not fear the queen. The only one I fear is God.”

Hearing this, the queen straightened herself and bowed deeply before him.

“To a man who fears such a noble God, I offer my deepest respect.”

## Three Pieces of Advice



A talking bird was caught by a hunter and pleaded,  
“Please let me go, and in return, I will give you three  
pieces of advice.”

“Three pieces of advice? What are they? Tell me first, and  
I swear I’ll let you free.”

The bird replied,

“First, never regret what you have done.

Second, don’t believe in the impossible, no matter what  
others say.

Third, never climb a tree you cannot climb.”

The hunter kept his promise and released the bird.

The bird flew high up into a tall tree and called down,

“Fool! You didn’t see the precious pearl in my mouth.”

Angered, the hunter tried to catch the bird again and  
climbed the tree —

only to fall and injure his leg.

“Fool,” the bird said, “you’ve already forgotten my advice.

You regretted your decision to let me go.

You believed the impossible — that I carried a pearl in my  
mouth.

And you climbed a tree you could not climb, only to get  
hurt.”

With that, the bird flew away, leaving the hunter behind.

## Faith



Rabbi Baal Shem Tov and his disciple were traveling through a harsh, barren land when, unfortunately, their water supply ran out.

The disciple, parched and desperate, felt his strength failing and fear creeping in. He turned to the rabbi and asked,

“Master, my throat is burning with thirst. Is this how I will die?”

The rabbi calmly replied,

“Do you have faith? When God created the world, He foresaw this very moment and prepared water for you in advance.”

They continued walking in silence. After some time, they saw a man approaching from a distance, carrying a water jar on his back.

The master and disciple bought water from him.

Curious, the rabbi asked the man,

“Why are you carrying water through such a desolate place?”

The man shrugged and said,

“Oh, my master must be crazy. He told me to go all the way to the stream beyond this wilderness to fetch water. You have no idea how hard it was.”

The rabbi turned to his disciple and said quietly,

“See how deeply God’s care extends.”

## Repentance



Rabbi Ishmael ben Elisha said,  
“Repent for just one day before you die.”

His students asked,

“How can we know when we will die?”

The rabbi replied,

“That is why a person must repent every day —  
because death may come tomorrow.”

## Where Is God?



One day, a Roman man came to a rabbi and said mockingly,

“You keep talking about God, but tell me—where exactly is God?

If you can show me where God is, then I might believe.”

The rabbi, not fond of such spiteful questions, took the man outside and pointed toward the sun.

“Look directly at that sun,” he said.

The Roman glanced at the sun and quickly shouted,

“How can anyone look directly at the sun?”

The rabbi smiled and replied,

“If you cannot even stare straight at the sun — one of God’s many creations —


how can you expect to see the greatness of God Himself?”

## The Useless Umbrella



Two wise men were walking down the street.  
One of them was carrying an umbrella.  
Suddenly, rain began to fall.  
The man without the umbrella said to his companion,  
“Open your umbrella.”  
The other replied,  
“It won’t help.”  
“What do you mean it won’t help? When it rains, you use  
an umbrella.”  
“This umbrella is full of holes.”  
“Then why did you bring it at all?”  
“I didn’t expect it to rain.”

## The Bandage

 A king once gently wrapped a bandage around his son's injured arm after a playful accident.

He said,

“My son, as long as you keep this bandage on, running or swimming won't make the pain worse.

But if you take it off, the wound will not heal quickly — it may even get worse.”

The law is like that bandage.

Within every human heart lies a natural tendency toward wrongdoing.

But as long as one clings to a sense of duty and respect for the law,

one's true nature will never be corrupted.



## The Duty of a Judge



As a rabbi was crossing a bridge, a man reached out and helped steady him.

The rabbi asked,

“Why do you help me?”

The man replied,

“I am currently involved in a lawsuit, and the verdict has not yet been decided.”

The rabbi responded,

“In that case, I am not qualified to judge your case.

A judge must never accept bribes — neither money nor any other kind of favor.”

A judge must always feel the sharp edge of a sword at his chest,

and remember that beneath his feet lies the pit of hell.

## A Single Rose



There once was a king who owned a large orchard. He planned to change its purpose and walked through it one last time.

In a quiet corner, hidden among thorny bushes, he spotted a single rose blooming proudly and beautifully all alone.

Drawn to it, the king approached, and the rose's fragrance spread gently in every direction.

He was overwhelmed by a feeling of awe.

"This single rose has saved the orchard," the king declared.

"Leave this place just as it is."

One person's good deed can warm the whole world.

Imagine how kind the world would be if each of us strived to be that one person.

## Just One Hole



Many people were sailing together on a ship.  
A man sat quietly, but then began to dig a hole in the  
bottom of the boat with a chisel.

The passengers were alarmed and shouted at him,  
“What are you doing?!”

Calmly, he replied,  
“This is my seat. Whatever I do here is none of your  
business.”

Soon after, the entire ship sank — with all its passengers.

## The Strong and the Weak



In this world, there are four things so small and weak that even the mightiest fear them.

The lion fears the mosquito,  
the elephant fears the leech,  
the scorpion fears the fly,  
and the hawk fears the spider.

No matter how great and powerful someone is,  
they can never be truly invincible.  
Even the weakest can overcome the strongest,  
when conditions are just right.

## Different Views on Justice



When Alexander the Great visited Israel, a Jewish man stepped forward and asked,

“Do you desire our gold and treasures?”

“I do not want gold or treasures,” Alexander replied.

“I already have plenty of those. What I truly wish to know is your tradition and your sense of justice.”

While Alexander was still in Israel, two men came to a rabbi seeking a wise judgment.

Their story was this:

One man had bought a bundle of rags from the other.

As he sorted through the rags, he discovered a large amount of gold coins hidden inside.

He returned to the seller and said,

“I bought rags, not gold coins. I will return these coins to you.”

The seller responded,

“I sold you the entire bundle of rags, so whatever is inside belongs to you.”

The two men argued over the gold coins, refusing to give way, until the matter reached the rabbi.

The rabbi smiled and asked,

“Do either of you have unmarried children?”

One man said he had a daughter; the other said he had a son.

The rabbi then ruled,

“Since you each have a child, marry them to each other and let the gold belong to both of you.”

The men were pleased and called it a wise decision.

Later, the rabbi recounted the story to Alexander and asked,

“Your Majesty, how would you judge in such a case?”

Alexander answered simply,

“I would kill both men and take the gold myself. That is my idea of justice.”

## The Three Sisters with Flaws



Once, there was a man who had three daughters. Each daughter was famously beautiful throughout the region, but each had a secret flaw.

The eldest was terribly lazy,  
the second had a habit of stealing,  
and the youngest could not stop speaking ill of others.

One day, a wealthy man with three sons heard of these beautiful sisters and came to ask for their hands in marriage.

The father of the daughters hesitated, worried about their flaws, and postponed his decision.

The man with three sons asked,  
“Do you have other plans for their marriage?”  
“No,” the father replied.

“Do you think my sons are not good enough for your daughters?”

“Not at all. They are more than worthy.”

Finally, the father confessed his daughters’ faults honestly. To his surprise, the man with three sons nodded calmly and said,

“Don’t worry. I will take responsibility and handle these matters.”

The wealthy man married all three daughters to his sons and made special arrangements for each daughter.

For the lazy eldest daughter, he assigned several servants

to attend to her needs.

For the second daughter who stole, he showed her a large warehouse. The daughter was overwhelmed by the countless treasures inside. After touring the warehouse, the man locked the doors securely. Seeing the daughter's disappointment, he handed her the key and said,

"My dear, take whatever you need from here. Anything you want is yours."

As for the youngest daughter, who loved to gossip and speak ill of others, he would call her every morning and ask,

"Who will you criticize today?"

One day, the daughters' father visited them and asked how they were doing.

The eldest replied lazily,

"I sleep, play, and eat to my heart's content. The servants do all the work, so I live very comfortably."

The second daughter said brightly,

"My father-in-law entrusted me with the entire warehouse. Whenever I have free time, I go there and pick whatever I want. I couldn't ask for more."

But the youngest daughter pouted. When her father asked how she was, she complained that her father-in-law constantly questioned her about her marital relations, making her uncomfortable.

The father smiled wryly, knowing full well the truth — that the youngest daughter was the one who spoke ill of her father-in-law.

Everyone has flaws.



Flaws can be overcome if managed properly.  
But speaking ill of others is more dangerous than murder.  
Murder kills only one person, but gossip kills three:  
the one who speaks ill,  
the one who listens without objection,  
and the one who is spoken about.

## How to Execute a Murderous Chicken



There was once a chicken on trial for murder. It was accused of pecking a newborn baby lying in a small cradle, causing the infant's death.

Witnesses were called to testify in court.

The chicken was found guilty and sentenced to execution.

Even a chicken, if accused of murder, must not be executed until its guilt is clearly proven beyond doubt.

## Yohanan Who Saved His People



In the year 70 CE, when the Romans destroyed all the Jewish temples and sought to annihilate the Jewish people, the Jews in Jerusalem were deeply divided into two factions: the dove party and the hawk party. Amidst fierce internal conflict and the brutal threats of the Romans, Yohanan pondered how his people could survive.

He came to the conclusion that a decisive one-on-one meeting with the Roman general, who was besieging the city, was necessary.

However, at that time all the Jews were trapped inside Jerusalem's walls and could not leave without Roman permission. Moreover, Yohanan, who belonged to the dove party, was under constant surveillance by the hawk party.

To meet the Roman general, Yohanan first had to find a way to escape the city. He devised a clever plan.

Soon, a rumor spread rapidly inside the city that Yohanan was gravely ill. Nearly everyone came to visit him, even if only from a distance, whispering with worry that he might not live long. After a while, news of his death was announced.

Yohanan's disciples took his coffin and prepared to bury it outside the city walls. Since Jewish law forbade seeing the deceased's face, the coffin lid was tightly closed. But the hawk party's guards insisted on verifying if Yohanan was

truly dead and tried to stab the coffin with their swords.

The disciples fiercely protested, calling it a grave insult to the dead. After struggling to protect the coffin and breaking through the hawk guards, the disciples encountered Roman soldiers who also blocked their way and threatened to stab the coffin.

“We cannot stab the coffin of our leader,” the disciples calmly reasoned. “If the Roman Emperor were dead, would you stab his coffin? We are unarmed and only on our way to bury our teacher.”

Reluctantly, the Romans allowed them to pass.

At last, outside the city, Yohanan emerged from the coffin and requested a meeting with the Roman general.

Sitting before the general, Yohanan quietly looked into his eyes and said,

“I salute you as the representative of the Roman Emperor.”

The general, angered at what he perceived as an insult to the emperor, shouted. But Yohanan confidently interrupted him:

“You will surely become the Roman Emperor.”

“Tell me what you want,” the general asked more calmly.

“I have but one request,” Yohanan replied. “Please build a small school—just a classroom for ten rabbis to study—and promise never to destroy it under any circumstances.”

Yohanan knew full well that Jerusalem would soon fall and be destroyed by the Romans, and that many Jews would be slaughtered. He also knew there was nothing he could do to stop it. Yet he believed that if they could save that school, the spirit of the Jewish people would endure.

“Agreed,” said the general, relieved that the request was so modest.

Soon after, the emperor died and the general became the new emperor. As Yohanan had predicted, he ordered the Roman army to spare that small school. The scholars who remained there preserved Jewish knowledge and tradition. After the war ended, the school became the center guiding the life and culture of the Jewish people.

## Akiva's Prayer



Akiva was captured and imprisoned in Rome, sentenced to death. The Romans, not satisfied with crucifixion alone, chose a crueler method to execute him — burning him with a red-hot iron. Their intention was to show such terrible suffering that the Jewish people would never dare to rebel again.

On the day of the execution, the Roman commander was present to oversee the punishment of the Jewish leader. It happened to be morning prayer time. Despite the scorching heat of the red-hot iron burning his body, Akiva did not cease his prayers.

The commander, watching in amazement, asked with wide eyes,

“How can you pray in such agony?”

Akiva calmly replied,

“In this very moment, while praying, I find the joy of truly loving God.”

With that serene answer, the bright flame of his life slowly faded away.

## Head and Tail



The tail of a snake was always unhappy about its fate—having to follow wherever the head went. One day, finally fed up, the tail shouted at the head:

“Why must I always be behind you? And why do you drag me around however you please? Isn’t that so unfair? We’re both part of the same snake, yet I’m forced to be your slave!”

The head calmly replied,

“That’s because you have no eyes to see ahead, no ears to hear danger, and no brain to make decisions. I’m not acting just for myself — I work hard to guide you on the right path.”

The tail laughed loudly,

“Ha! That’s what dictators always say. They abuse power, oppress, control, watch, threaten, and ruthlessly crush any resistance — all while insisting they only want the people to live happily and that they’re really working for everyone’s good...”

The tail went on without stopping, so the head cut in,

“If you’re so unhappy, why don’t you take the lead for once?”

“Follow me!” the tail shouted without hesitation.

But the snake immediately fell into a ditch. The head dragged the body back onto the ground. The tail began to lead again, but this time it got stuck in a thicket of thorns.

It struggled hard to get out, but its wounded body was only pressed deeper into the prickly bush. The head wanted to leave it there, but seeing it might die, it pulled the tail free of the thorns.

Though embarrassed, the tail grew more desperate — determined to prove it could lead. It hurried forward but this time fell into a fire. The head desperately tried to save the tail, but it was too late. Both the tail and the head perished in the flames.

When choosing a leader, we must choose the head — never the tail.



## Enough Patience



Two friends were arguing whether Rabbi Hillel would lose his temper or not, and they made a bet of 400 zuz.

The friend who believed Hillel would get angry went to his house and knocked on the door.

Hillel was bathing before the Sabbath and, drying his wet body with a towel, he put on his clothes and opened the door. A stranger stood there. The man greeted him politely and asked directly,

“Rabbi, why do the people of Palmyra have poor eyesight?”

“That’s because they live in the desert. The wind blows sand into their eyes,” Hillel answered kindly.

The man bowed and left. Hillel went back to the bath. Soon, the door was knocked again. Hillel dried off, dressed, and opened the door. It was the same man. He bowed and asked,

“Rabbi, why do the people of Africa have flat feet?”

“That’s because they live in watery regions. They walk in water all the time, so their feet have become flat,” Hillel explained kindly.

The man bowed and left. Hillel returned to the bath once more. The door was knocked again. Hillel dried off and dressed, then opened the door. It was the same man. He bowed and asked,

“Rabbi, why do the people of Babylonia have long faces?”

“That is an important question,” Hillel said. “It’s because Babylonia lacks skilled midwives like those in Palestine.”

As soon as Hillel finished speaking, the man angrily said,

“There is no one else like you in this world, Rabbi.

Because of you, I have lost a lot of money.”

Hillel smiled and said,

“It is much better for you to lose money than for me to lose my patience.”

Perhaps demanding this much tolerance, composure, and confidence from any leader is too much. But isn’t it only fair for the top 0.1% of people who lead the world to be expected to possess such virtues?

## Wheel Tracks



There was a merchant who traveled from city to city, trading on a large scale. One winter morning, he set off toward the next city with several wagons heavily loaded with goods.

Halfway through the journey, an unexpected heavy snowfall began. In no time, over 30 centimeters of snow had piled up, making it difficult to find the road. The blizzard still raged fiercely.

However, since they had already passed more than half the distance, the merchant judged that turning back or pressing forward would be equally difficult, so he decided to continue moving ahead.

After wandering lost in the snow for a long time, they finally managed to find the way. Everyone sighed with relief, but the merchant let out a deep sigh and lamented.

One of the drivers asked,

“Now that we’ve found the road, why do you sigh so heavily?”

The merchant replied,

“A single wagon leaves wheel tracks that the wind or snow quickly erases. But several wagons loaded with heavy cargo leave deep ruts. The wagons behind us will all have to struggle just like we did, following the tracks we left behind.”

## The Fox and the Mul



On the road, a fox came across a mule. The fox looked the mule up and down—his plump body, bright eyes, and big ears.

“What kind of creature is this? Too small to be a horse, not quite a donkey... I’ve never seen anything like it.”

Curious, the fox called the mule over. The mule, as if waiting for the chance, began to chatter away.

“I’m a mule. My uncle was the king’s warhorse—handsome and strong. He ran like a storm, thunder and rain chasing him, and when he stamped his feet, the whole earth shook. His long mane flying in the wind was a sight to behold, like a living painting. My mother was the beauty everyone in the village talked about. And my father...”

The fox realized too late that by asking, he was stuck listening to the mule’s endless boasting. For a very long time!

## Poisonous Words



The most dangerous thing in the world is poisonous words. Poisonous words are those whispered rumors that spread among friends—who said what, who did what—gossip and nonsense.

No matter what you hear, keep it buried in your heart. Whether it's about a friend or an enemy, never carry someone else's words for them. Keep your mouth shut until speaking becomes a sin.

If you chatter too much, others will watch you warily—and in some cases, they may come to hate you.

## The Fox and the Wolf



One evening, a fox was eating some food when a wolf passing by caught the scent and rushed over, trying to snatch the meal.

“This small meal wouldn’t satisfy a big wolf like you anyway. If I finish eating it, I’ll show you a place where you can eat your fill,” said the fox.

“Alright, but if you lie, you know what will happen,” replied the wolf.

After the fox finished eating, it led the wolf to a well. Two buckets were hanging on opposite ropes connected to a pulley.

“Look down there,” said the fox.

The wolf peered into the well and saw a bright white round object floating at the bottom.

“See that big piece of cheese? Let’s go down and eat it. It’s big enough for both of us.”

The fox picked up a large stone. Both the fox and the wolf climbed into different buckets at the same time. Suddenly, the fox threw the stone into the water. The bucket the fox was in rose up, while the wolf’s bucket plunged down.

The fox quickly got out of the bucket and disappeared into the forest.

## There's a Reason Even for Bad Customs



A wealthy merchant was living with his newly married son and daughter-in-law. When the daughter-in-law gave birth to a son, they planned to hold a celebration feast. The kind-hearted son, who was dedicated to helping the poor, spoke to his father:

“Father, how should we arrange the seating for the guests? If we seat the rich at the main seats and the poor by the door like everyone else, my heart will feel heavy. Since this is a feast for my son, please give the poor a chance to be treated with honor.”

The father thought for a moment and then said:

“Have you thought about it this way? Why do poor people come to a feast? They come to eat delicious food. Why do the rich come to a feast? They come to be respected. Imagine if the poor sat at the main seats and the rich sat by the door as you suggest. The poor would feel pressured to keep up appearances and wouldn't enjoy the food freely, and the rich would feel insulted. I know your suggestion comes from a good place, but changing the customs of the world isn't as easy as you think. Every custom exists for a reason.”

## Why on the Sabbath?



One Sabbath afternoon, a man looking out the window of a rabbi's study asked him,

"Rabbi, if you find a cow drowning in the water on the Sabbath, should you save it or just leave it alone?"

"You should just leave it alone. On the Sabbath, you must not do any work. But why do you ask?"

"Because there's a cow drowning in the lake over there."

"Is that so? Then nothing can be done."

"Oh no, now the water is up to the cow's head. It looks so pitiful!" the man exclaimed.

"Why are you getting so upset? Are you the cow's owner?"

"No, Rabbi, the cow is yours."



## I'll Do It My Way



The captain shouted in a rough voice to encourage his soldiers.

“Soldiers! The enemy forces are equal to ours. Each of you take down one enemy. Understood?”

Then one brave soldier shouted,

“I’ll take down two!”

A different soldier quietly said,

“Then please send me home.”

## Marriage



Marriage is made up of six elements.

One is love,

and the other five are all faith.

The first three weeks of marriage are spent observing each other,

the next three months are spent loving each other,

the following three years are spent arguing,

and the next thirty years are spent forgiving each other.

## True Friends



Two friends were separated by war and ended up living in enemy countries. One friend was caught and sentenced to death on suspicion of being a spy. Despite his pleas, nothing helped. He asked the king,

“Your Majesty, please grant me one month. I want to return home to say farewell to my family.”

“How can I trust such a promise?”

“My friend will guarantee it. If he does not return, you may kill me instead,” said the friend standing nearby.

The king was moved by such a deep friendship and allowed him to go home.

A month passed. The sun was setting, and the deadline was near, but he did not return. The king looked at the other friend with a cold expression, thinking, “As expected.” Though regretful, he ordered the friend to be executed.

At that moment, a man came running from afar, shouting loudly. Out of breath, he cried to the king,

“On my way back, unexpected troubles delayed me. I’m so relieved to still make it in time. Please spare my friend and kill me instead.”

The king was deeply moved and spared them both.

“The friendship between you two is truly remarkable. I wish I could share such a bond with you.”

From that day, the two became friends of the king.

Wise people advise not to trust a friend too quickly. Some only seek friends when they need help, ignoring them in hard times. Some sow discord and cause shameful fights. Others act friendly when friends succeed but cut ties abruptly when friends struggle. So, just as you keep a safe distance from enemies, always be cautious in friendships.

A loyal friend is like a safe refuge. Whoever has such a friend possesses great wealth. The value of a faithful friend is infinite—it cannot be measured by money. Never abandon an old friend.

## King Solomon's Dotting Fatherhood



King Solomon had a very wise and beautiful daughter, whom he adored dearly.

One night, King Solomon dreamed a vision. In his dream, he saw the man who would marry his daughter. Upon waking, he sensed that the young man was unsuitable and a bad match for his beloved daughter. This was absolutely unacceptable.

King Solomon built a secluded palace on a small island, surrounded it with tall walls, and locked his daughter inside. He placed many guards to ensure no one could enter the palace.

Meanwhile, the young man from Solomon's dream wandered through a wilderness. As night fell, bitter cold set in. He found the corpse of a dead lion and crawled inside to keep from freezing to death.

Suddenly, a huge bird appeared out of nowhere, lifting the entire lion's body into the air. But the bird struggled and dropped the lion halfway through its flight—right into the courtyard of the princess's secluded palace.

Thus, the two met, and soon after, they fell in love.

## A Love Letter



There was a young couple deeply in love. The young man vowed in a letter to love the maiden faithfully for life. They met every day, whispering sweet words and sharing tender moments.

One day, the man went on a journey. She waited anxiously for his return, but he did not come back for a long time. Her friends pitied her and showed sympathy, but those who envied her spoke harsh words.

“A man who leaves once never returns.”

The letter in which he pledged his love made her cry, but it also comforted her heart and gave her strength to endure each day.

Then, as if by a miracle, the lover returned. She poured out her pain and sorrow to him.

“How could you stay faithful and wait through all that hardship?” he asked gently.

“I am a woman of Israel,” she said firmly, smiling brightly.

Despite countless trials and hardships, the Jewish people have preserved Israel by holding on to the sacred promises given by God.

## Three Friends



There was a man who suddenly received an order to come to the royal palace immediately. At the unexpected summons from the king, fear crept into his mind—he wondered if some misfortune had befallen him.

The man had three friends. The first friend was the one he loved most dearly. The second friend was also loved, but not as dearly as the first. The third friend was just an ordinary friend—not especially close.

He asked the first friend to come with him, but was refused outright. The second friend said he would accompany him only as far as the city gate, but no further. However, the third friend gladly agreed to follow him and said,

“Whatever happens, if you have done nothing wrong, there’s nothing to fear. I will go with you and stand as your witness.”

The first friend represents wealth. The second friend, relatives. The third friend, good deeds. Good deeds may go unnoticed in life, but they remain with you even after death.

## Hatred and Resentment



One friend went to borrow a sickle from another friend but was refused. The next day, the friend who had refused to lend the sickle came to borrow an axe from the first friend.

“If you didn’t lend me your sickle, then I won’t lend you my axe,” he said.

This kind of attitude breeds hatred between them.

But if he said,

“Here it is. You didn’t lend me your sickle, but I will lend you my axe. I am different from you,”

this would breed resentment between them.



## Let's Keep Our Promises



A young girl got lost and accidentally fell into a well. It was a remote place, and no one knew she was there — she might have died alone. Terrified, she shouted desperately into the empty air, begging for help.

Just then, a man happened to pass by and looked down into the well. Seeing her tears of joy as she called out for help, he asked,

“If I save you, will you marry me?”

It sounded absurd, but she had no choice.

“Yes...” she replied.

After a long struggle, the man pulled the girl out of the well. She was even more beautiful than he had seen from afar.

“Now, keep your promise,” he said.

“Which family are you from?” she asked.

He answered that he came from a priestly family.

“I’m from a priestly family too,” she said seriously. “Is it right for people from such a sacred lineage to behave like animals without marriage vows? Please, promise me you will come to my home later, ask my parents for their blessing, and marry me.”

The man agreed to her request, and the two pledged their marriage. With no one around, they called upon the heavens, the well, and even a passing rat as witnesses.

After returning to their homes, the girl kept her vow and rejected every proposal she received. But as a beautiful young woman from a noble family, suitors never stopped coming. In the end, she tore her clothes and wandered barefoot through the streets, throwing stones at people to keep them away. Eventually, no one dared to propose to her anymore.

Meanwhile, the man completely forgot their promise and married another woman, with whom he had a son. One day, while the child was playing in the yard, a rat appeared and bit him to death. Their second son drowned in the well.

Though crushed with grief, the boy's mother believed that God's actions must have a reason.

"If God is punishing us with the deaths of our young sons, then we must have done something wrong. Think carefully," she told her husband.

Suddenly, he remembered the promise to the girl. When he told his wife, she urged him to keep his vow.

After divorcing his wife, the man followed the faint memory and went to the city where the girl lived.

"She has been mentally unstable for a long time and cannot marry anyone now," her father told him.

Overwhelmed by guilt, the man begged to see her one last time. Reluctantly, the father led him to her room.

"Look at me, don't you remember?" the man said.

The mad woman looked at him blankly.

"You're the one who saved me from the well in the middle of the wilderness."

As he recounted that day's events one by one, she quietly

watched him. Then, fully restored, she spoke gently:

“See? I kept my promise. Because of you, to keep my promise to you, I lived in suffering for a long time. But now that you are here, it’s enough.”

Moved to tears, her parents witnessed the reunion. The two married, had children, and lived happily ever after.

## Jealousy



A man mischievously asked the rabbi,  
“Rabbi, you know everything. When Adam returns to  
Paradise in the morning, what does Eve do?”

The rabbi replied teasingly,  
“Eve counts Adam’s ribs.”

## The Greatest Wisdom is a Kind Heart



In a small town, there were two brothers. The older brother was clever and good at studying, the pride and joy of their parents. But the younger brother was foolish and only wasted food, considered a burden.

One day, the older brother decided to leave home to make a fortune. Their parents, though worried, packed his favorite food and belongings and gave him all their savings for the journey.

Confidently, the older brother set off. At the village entrance, he met a dirty, smelly stray dog with patchy fur.

“Could you wash me clean, brush my fur, and give me some food? I will repay your kindness,” the dog said.

“Get lost, you mutt! My father and mother don’t do that, so neither will I!” The brother shouted and threw a stone to scare the dog away.

Walking further, he saw a well covered in green algae, surrounded by muddy dirt, and the silver ladle hanging on it was rusty. He was thirsty but turned away, disgusted.

“Clean me up, polish my ladle, and clear the mud. I will repay you,” the well said.

“My father and mother don’t do such things, so neither will I!” the brother snapped angrily.

He went on and came across a pear tree with withered branches and dry cracked earth.

“Prune my dead branches, dig the soil around my roots, and water me. I will repay you,” the tree begged.

“My father and mother don’t do such things, so neither will I!” the brother refused again.

Finally, he reached the city and got a job at a large inn. After a year of hard work, the owner told him,

“In the stable are horses, carriages, and boxes. Choose whatever you like instead of money.”

The brother picked the healthiest horse with the finest saddle, a shiny new carriage with a large box.

On the way back, he tried to pick fruit from a golden pear tree, but the branch snapped away, yelling,

“Get lost, you ungrateful fool! You refused to help before, and now you want my fruit?”

At the well, when he tried to drink water with the shiny ladle, it slipped and shouted,

“Get lost, you ungrateful fool! You refused to help before, and now you want my water?”

Near home, a lovely dog wearing a necklace of pearls and diamonds approached. When the brother tried to take the necklace, the dog growled,

“Get lost, you ungrateful fool! You refused to help before, and now you want my jewels? One more move and I’ll bite!”

Angry, the brother whipped his horse and rushed home. He knocked loudly on the door, shouting,

“Father, Mother! I’ve come back with many gifts. Spread the tablecloth!”

But his mother replied,

“Spread the tablecloth? A simple cloth will do for you.”

Neighbors came, but the gifts were all worthless—an old horse, a worn carriage, a box full of mud. The house was a mess, and the villagers shook their heads and left.

Then the foolish younger brother set out with only some bread, water, and a little money. He met the same stray dog.

“Wash me clean, brush my fur, and feed me. I will repay your kindness.”

He did just that.

He cleaned the algae-covered well, polished the rusty ladle, and cleared the mud.

He pruned the pear tree’s dead branches, loosened the soil, and watered it.

In the city, he worked at the same inn for a year. When it was time to choose his reward, he picked only a worn horse, an old carriage, and a few small boxes—enough for his work.

He passed the golden pear tree and politely asked,

“May I pick a fruit?”

“Of course, you deserve it,” the tree replied.

He drank from the well’s ladle, which happily offered water and even let him take the ladle as a gift.

Near home, the lovely dog came to him and gave him the pearl and diamond necklace as a present.

When the younger brother returned at night, he waited until morning to knock on the door.

“Father, Mother! I’m home with gifts. Please spread the tablecloth!”

His mother reluctantly opened the small boxes, which overflowed with gold, silver, diamonds, pearls, and treasures.

The house was filled with shining riches. They hugged the younger brother and said,

“Which son was really foolish, and which was clever?”

Kindness is like humility. Without humility, there can be no kindness. Without kindness, humility cannot exist.



## The Purpose of a Lock



Is a lock on the door meant to keep thieves out? No, it is meant to keep honest people from going inside.

If a thief wants to break in and steal, whether the lock is there or not, they will find a way in anyway. But if the door is open, even an honest person might be tempted to go inside just to look around.

So when you leave your home or get out of your car, you lock the door to avoid tempting honest people.

We should not tempt others. To avoid tempting them, sometimes locking the door is necessary.

## How to Find a Lost Money Pouch



A country merchant came to the city to buy goods. He heard that a big sale would happen in a few days, so he decided to wait until then. But he had a problem with his money pouches. Carrying them was heavy, and he had nowhere safe to keep them. Most of all, he was worried about thieves.

So, he found a quiet spot and buried one pouch of money underground, marking the spot carefully. But the next day, when he went to check, the money was gone. He looked around and saw a lonely house nearby with many holes in the walls. He thought the person living there had probably seen him bury the pouch and dug it up later.

He walked up to the house and looked inside. An old man was coming out to the yard. The merchant spoke to him.

“Hello. I am a merchant from the countryside. I’ve heard that the elders in the city are very wise. Since I met you, I hope you can give me some advice...”

“What is it?” the old man answered reluctantly.

“Well, I came here to buy goods, so I brought two money pouches—one with 500 silver coins and the other with 800. I heard there will be a big sale soon, so I secretly buried the smaller pouch yesterday. But now I don’t know if I should bury the larger pouch with it or trust someone to keep it for me.”

The merchant looked puzzled. The old man's eyes lit up, and he said eagerly,

“Oh, you're so naive! Who can you trust in this world? Burying it underground is best. If I were you, I'd bury the big pouch right where you hid the small one.”

“That must be safest, right? I think so too,” the merchant said.

After the merchant left, the greedy old man quickly ran to the spot, dug up the pouches he had stolen, and reburied them there.

The merchant secretly watched, then dug up the pouches and safely recovered his money.

## Someone Poorer Than Me



When Akiva was a poor young shepherd, he fell in love with the daughter of a wealthy farmer. Despite their parents' disapproval, the couple married but were soon thrown out of their home.

They were so poor that instead of a blanket, they slept on straw. One day, Akiva brushed the straw from his wife's hair and said,

"How I wish I could buy you a beautiful piece of jewelry! Someday, I'll get you a gold ornament with a map of Jerusalem on it."

One day, Rabbi Eliezer, disguised as an ordinary man, stood at their door and said,

"Please give me some straw. My wife is about to have a baby, and we have nothing to lay on."

Akiva looked at his wife and said,

"We thought we were very poor, but there are people who don't even have straw to lay on."

Rabbi Akiva is one of the most respected rabbis, the first editor of the Talmud, and a national hero of the Jewish people.

## We Only Remember What We Are Owed



A Jewish man, nearing his death, called his son to his side. As the father recalled who he had lent money to and how much, the son carefully wrote everything down. When the father said he was finished, the son replied,

“Father, now please tell me who we owe money to and how much.”

The father answered weakly,

“There’s no need at all. Those we owe money to will surely remember.”

## Keep Telegrams as Short as Possible



A son-in-law sent a telegram to his father-in-law and mother-in-law:

“Rebecca gave birth to a son safely.”

When the father-in-law came rushing to see his daughter and grandson after receiving the telegram, he said to his son-in-law,

“Telegram messages must be as short as possible. Don’t you know every single word costs money?”

“How could I make it any shorter?”

“‘Rebecca’ is unnecessary. Who else but your wife would have given birth? Why mention ‘gave birth safely’? Isn’t that a given? If it wasn’t safe, would a stork have brought the baby? And you didn’t even need to say it was a son. If it was a daughter, it wouldn’t be a cause for celebration anyway.”

## If It's the Same Cost



A telegram arrived from a husband who was traveling:  
“Arriving at station 16:20, bringing a rattlesnake.”

The wife went to meet him at the station. Looking  
suspiciously at his suitcase, she asked,

“Where’s the rattlesnake?”

“Oh, that? They said I could add eight more characters for  
the base fee, so I just added it. No point wasting money at  
the post office, right?”

## Luckily Illiterate?



An immigrant, looking for a job, heard that a church was hiring a secretary and went to talk to the person in charge. The person explained the duties of the secretary:

“It’s not too difficult. You clean the church, keep the doors open during service, hand out prayer books, issue receipts for offerings — mostly tasks like that.”

“Um, is it okay if I can’t read or write?” he hesitated to ask.

“Then I’m afraid it won’t work. The secretary needs to be able to write,” the person replied.

It seemed impossible for an illiterate person to get the job. Reluctantly, he borrowed some money and started a street vending business. His business did so well that before long he opened a store. After a few years, he owned several shops. One day, he went to the bank to borrow money to open another store.

“I need \$50,000,” he said.

“Of course, we can lend it to you. Please sign this contract,” the bank clerk said, handing him a contract and a pen.

“Um, I can’t write,” he said sheepishly.

The clerk was surprised and put both hands on his chest, saying, “What kind of person do you think you’d be now if you could write?”



“Probably the church secretary,” he answered with a smile.

## Be Precise with Calculations



An elderly lady came to the post office holding a returned letter and asked the clerk at the counter,

“Miss, why did my letter come back to me?”

The postal clerk looked at the letter and said,

“It’s because the letter is heavier than the postage you put on.”

“So, what should I do now?”

“Just put on one more stamp.”

The lady replied with a look that said she couldn’t believe what she was hearing,

“Listen, miss, if I put on one more stamp, won’t the letter get even heavier?”

## The Best Business Strategy is Honesty



A Jewish man entered an unfamiliar tavern and ordered a glass of beer.

He was served a beer half-filled with liquid and half with foam.

He asked the tavern owner,

“How many bottles of beer do you sell in a day?”

“About twenty bottles.”

“I know a way for you to sell more than twice that amount.”

“Oh? What’s that?”

“Fill the glass all the way with beer.”

## A Fate of Poverty



There were two brothers: a wealthy older brother and a poor younger brother.

The older brother wanted to help without hurting his younger brother's pride, so he thought of a clever plan.

He went to a street where his younger brother usually passed by, and at the right time, placed a sack full of gold coins right in the middle of the road, then hid to watch.

The poor younger brother appeared at the alley entrance and muttered,

"I wonder what it feels like to be blind? Maybe I should try it once."

Then he closed his eyes and tried to walk as if he were blind.

He passed by the sack of gold coins, but soon said he couldn't walk with his eyes closed, so he opened them and continued on his way.

## The Wealthy Father



There was a wealthy man who was rumored to be a miser.

One day, a committee asked him to donate money so that poor people could buy unleavened bread (bread made without yeast).

Though he couldn't refuse, he only gave a very small amount to the committee.

"Your son, though poor, has given more money than you," people mocked him.

"He has a rich father," he replied, "but I do not have such a father."

## The Reason for Sadness



An incredibly wealthy man passed away. Many rich mourners gathered to see the deceased one last time.

Among them, a very shabby man was sobbing intensely as he followed the funeral procession.

Someone walking alongside him encouraged the poor man and said,

“You must have been very close to him.”

“No, I have no relation to him at all.”

“Then why do you cry so bitterly?”

“Because it’s so sad that I have no relation to him.”

## Sharing Joy and Sorrow



A Jewish shop owner said to his wife,  
“On days when sales are bad, after closing the shop, turn on the lights brightly and make a lot of noise. On days when sales are good, just light a single candle and stay quiet.”

His wife tilted her head and asked,

“Isn’t it the other way around?”

“No, it’s not. When we don’t make money, we should disappoint others too. If we keep the lights bright and make noise, people will think we earned a lot and get upset. But if we light only one candle and look gloomy, they’ll think business is bad and feel happy. That way, when we’re happy, others are happy, and when we’re sad, others are sad too.”

## The Donkey and the Diamond



There was a rabbi who made a living by chopping wood. The work was hard and time-consuming—cutting the wood and carrying it into town left him little time to study the Talmud.

To gain more time for study, he used his modest savings to buy a donkey from an Arab merchant in town. His students were happy, thinking the donkey would help him transport wood faster and give him more time to teach.

One day, while washing the donkey by the river, a diamond fell from its neck. The students rejoiced, believing their rabbi would now leave his poor woodcutter life behind and have plenty of time to study and teach.

But the rabbi soon went to the Arab merchant and instructed his students to return the diamond.

“Rabbi, isn’t this donkey yours?” the students protested.

“I bought the donkey, but not the diamond. Isn’t it just right to keep only what I purchased?”

The rabbi said, returning the diamond.

The merchant asked, “You bought the donkey, and the diamond was attached to it. Why must you return it?”

The rabbi replied, “A Jew’s tradition is not to take more than what was purchased. Therefore, I return this to you.”

The merchant admired his honesty and said, “Your God must be a great God.”



This story illustrates the Jewish economic philosophy rooted in honesty—selling good products at fair prices—which may explain why many Jews have become successful. Although stereotypes portray Jews as stingy or unscrupulous in money matters, their true strength lies in their unique economic principles and skillful business sense.

## The Child Who Grows Too Fast



At a children's clothing store run by a Jewish shopkeeper, a man picked out some clothes for his son and asked,

“Will these shrink after washing?”

“Don't worry,” replied the shopkeeper, “We only sell the highest quality products.”

A few days later, the man returned with his child and complained,

“You said these wouldn't shrink, but look at this! They shrank right after washing.”

Unfazed, the shopkeeper smiled and said to the child,

“Oh my, how cute! But you've grown so much in just a week—you really do grow fast.”

## The Rabbi and His Mother



A rabbi was walking with his mother along a rocky, uneven path. The journey was very difficult. The rabbi tried hard to clear stones and level the ground ahead, but walking was still hard. So, with every step she took, he supported his mother's feet with his hands.

However, from the strain, the rabbi became ill and had to lie down.

When the church elders heard what happened, they said, "Even if he does the same thing many times, he still has a long way to go to show the kind of devotion God desires."

Rabbi Yosef said,

"The sound of a mother's footsteps is like the coming of the Holy Spirit—never fall asleep to it."

## Like These Brothers



In Israel, there lived two farmer brothers who were very close. The elder brother was married with children, while the younger brother was still single. After their father passed away, they divided the fields and farmland equally, but they still worked together on the farm.

That autumn, they harvested the crops and fairly divided the grain into two equal parts, storing them each in their own granaries.

At night, the younger brother thought to himself,

“My brother has a wife and children, so his living expenses must be much higher than mine. He should save a little extra for his kids. I think I should secretly add some grain to his granary.”

So, during the night, the younger brother secretly moved a good amount of grain into his brother’s granary.

The elder brother also had his own thoughts,

“I have children, so I won’t worry much when I grow old, but my younger brother is single. Who will take care of him when he gets old? He should save up some grain for the future.”

That night, the elder brother secretly moved several sacks of grain into his younger brother’s granary.

The next morning, both brothers opened their granaries to check the grain — but to their surprise, the amounts had not

decreased at all. This happened again the next night, and the night after that, for three nights in a row.

On the fourth night, still confused by the strange situation, the brothers again secretly moved sacks of grain into each other's granaries. This time, they met in the middle.

“So that's why!”

“No wonder it felt so strange.”

The brothers cried out together, dropped the sacks, and ran to embrace each other in tears.

The very spot where these two brothers embraced and wept is still known today as one of the most sacred places in Jerusalem.

## The Dog Who Saved Its Owner



A venomous snake had silently slithered into a milk jar left on the kitchen floor, only to become trapped and perish within. In the countryside of ancient Israel, snakes were a common sight—but this one's deadly poison slowly seeped into the milk.

As the family gathered for their meal, the dog suddenly began to bark wildly. Confused, they couldn't grasp the reason behind the outburst.

When they reached to pour the milk, the dog sprang forward, overturning the jar and spilling its contents. Boldly, it began to lap up the poisoned milk itself.

Soon, the dog collapsed and died.

Only then did the family understand the sacrifice—and weep with heavy hearts.

If only the dog could have spoken, how many lives might it have saved.

## The Son and the Diamond



In the ancient town of Dumah in Israel, there was a man who possessed a magnificent diamond.

A rabbi decided to buy the diamond to adorn the temple.

For all who would visit the temple, the shining diamond would become a powerful symbol, leaving a lasting impression.

The rabbi gathered six thousand gold coins and went to the man's house.

Seeing the gold coins, the owner immediately agreed to sell the diamond.

But the key to the safe that held the diamond lay beneath the pillow of the owner's father, who was fast asleep.

"I cannot wake my sleeping father. Therefore, I will not sell the diamond."

The son said firmly.

Even in the face of such a great fortune, the son would not disturb his father's rest.

The rabbi was deeply moved by the son's profound devotion and shared this story far and wide.

## The Son Who Went to Heaven and the Son Who Went to Hell



A young man once prepared a chicken for his father. “Where did you get this chicken?” the father asked. “What does it matter where it came from? Just eat it,” the son replied curtly.

The father said no more.

In another village, a young man was working at a water mill grinding wheat.

When the king issued a decree calling all mill workers to the capital, this young man asked his father to take care of the mill in his place and went to the city.

The son who left his father to tend the mill went to heaven.

For he had been taken to the city against his will, knowing the king mistreated the mill workers, forcing them to work hard and giving them barely enough food.

The son who slaughtered the chicken for his father went to hell.

For he had answered his father’s question with disrespect and no sincerity.

If one does not treat their father with true heart, even serving delicious food is worthless.

It is far better to serve with devotion, even if it means letting your father work, than to offer empty gestures.



## The Pride of the Jews



A Jew with a son attending law school and a Catholic with a son attending seminary were longtime friends.

The Jew asked,

“What hopes do you have for your son once he becomes a priest?”

The Catholic replied,

“In a few years, he will become a bishop.”

The Jew asked,

“And after that?”

The Catholic answered,

“Then he will become an archbishop, then a cardinal. Perhaps even the pope.”

The Jew asked,

“Is that all?”

The Catholic, surprised, asked back,

“What more could you expect? Do you hope he’ll become the Messiah?”

The Jew smiled and said,

“One of our boys actually did.”

## It Depends on the Woman



A devout man and a devout woman got married, but after a long time without having children, they divorced.

The husband soon remarried, but unfortunately, he met a very wicked woman. He became just as bad as his new wife.

The wife also remarried later, but unfortunately, she met a very wicked man. However, her new husband became kind and devout, just like her.

Thus, a man's nature depends on the woman.

## The Perfume Shop Owner's Son



A certain Jew opened a perfume shop in a market where prostitutes often gathered. Thanks to the prostitutes, his business thrived, and the shop owner was very satisfied.

One day, the owner saw his son chatting and laughing with the prostitutes and became very angry, scolding him harshly.

At that moment, a passing Jew said,

“You are the one who opened a shop in the red-light district where the prostitutes gather. So, isn’t your son’s mingling with them a result of your own doing? Then why are you yelling at your son like this?”

## A Son Who Looks Just Like His Father



At dusk, a rabbi was walking home with his son. They saw a drunkard floundering in a ditch. Right beside him, the drunkard's son was also staggering drunkenly, behaving just like his father.

The rabbi said to his son,

“I envy that drunkard. He has a son who is just like him. I wonder if you resemble me as closely. Still, I hope I’m better than that man at teaching his son good skills.”

## Where Are We to Go?



A Jewish family expelled from Germany arrived at the border. The immigration officer felt sympathy for them but had to perform his duty.

“Where should we go?” the Jew asked.

The officer pointed to various countries on the globe and said,

“This country doesn’t accept Jews, that one currently bans foreigners due to economic troubles, and here is a desert, so no…”

The young son of the Jewish family asked,

“Sir, is there not another globe besides this one?”

## The Woman Who Spat on the Rabbi



Rabbi Meyer was famous for his powerful sermons delivered every Friday evening at the synagogue. Friday evenings were hectic for Jewish women, busy preparing food for the coming Sabbath. Yet, without fail, there was one woman who always came to hear Rabbi Meyer's sermons.

One Friday, after listening to the sermon, she hurried home only to find her husband waiting at the door.

"Tomorrow is the Sabbath! Where have you been?" he demanded.

"I was at the synagogue, listening to Rabbi Meyer's sermon," she replied.

Her husband exploded in anger:

"You like Rabbi Meyer so much? Then go live with him! Don't ever come back until you've spat in that rabbi's face!"

He slammed the door and left, forcing her to stay with a friend.

When Rabbi Meyer heard what had happened, he called the woman to him. Pretending to have something in his eye, he said,

"I've heard that spitting into one's eyes can help in times like these. Please, spit into my eye."

After some hesitation and gentle urging, she reluctantly spat into his eye.

Rabbi Meyer said,

“Now go home and tell your husband that you’ve spat in the rabbi’s face.”

When she left, his disciples confronted him angrily, as if they themselves had been humiliated:

“Why did you make her spit on your face?”

Rabbi Meyer answered calmly,

“For the sake of peace in the home, we must sometimes do even more than that.”

Conflicts between people are like a dam breaking—once it bursts, the flood cannot be stopped.

## Why you shouldn't be arrogant



There were brothers living in a city. The older brother was a rabbi, and the younger brother was a thief. The rabbi was shy about his brother, so he always stayed away from him.

One day, two people ran into each other on the street. My brother, a rabbi, ignored my brother as if he had not seen him. Then, my brother shouted angrily at my brother's back.

"Why are you being so arrogant? If I'm being special, that's for a reason. Because my brother is a rabbi. But what's so good about you when you have a thief as your brother?"