



Bon Mots of Life

Life is full of those little truisms that we hear as children and play back as adults. Recorded in books like Life's Little Instruction Book and P.S. I Love You, sprinkled throughout The Reader's Digest and gathering dust in The Farmer's Almanac, pithy sayings and bons mots can do more than just make us smile or send us running for a pen and paper to write it down and hang it on the refrigerator.

If someone were to ask you, "What's your motto in life?" or "What are your golden rules for living?" how would you respond?

Perhaps by familiarizing ourselves with one of the treasure-stores of Jewish wisdom, Pirkei Avot - Chapters of the Sages, we can each find our own special saying that "fits like a glove."

(On the long Shabbat afternoons, from after Passover until Rosh Hashana, it is customary to continue our study of Pirkei Avot which was begun in the spring.)

Many of the teachings of our Sages in this guide to Jewish living are preceded by the words "He used to say..." One commentator points out that most of the Sages quoted said many, many things, some much more famous than the quoted teaching. However, "he used to say" tips us off to the fact that what is recorded in Pirkei Avot for that particular Sage was his motto in life, the slogan he lived by and with on a daily basis.

For instance, Joshua ben Perachaya used to say, "Judge every person favorably." The great Sage Hillel said, "Be of the disciples of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing peace, loving your fellow creatures, and bringing them near to the Torah." Hillel also made the famous statement: "If I am not for myself, who is for me? And if I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?"

Shammai, Hillel's colleague, said, "Receive every person with a cheerful countenance."

Shimon ben Gamliel said, "There is nothing better for one's person than silence" and "not study but practice is the essential thing."

Rabban Gamliel said, "Do not say, 'When I will have free time I will study [Torah],' for perhaps you will never have free time." He also used to say, "In a place where there are no men, strive to be a man [i.e., mensch]." This is just a sprinkling of the many insightful saying one will find when perusing Pirkei Avot.

To acquire a motto for life, one needn't create an original or innovative saying. Your "saying" already exists for, as the wise King Solomon said, "There is nothing new under the sun." It is waiting to be personalized and stamped by you with your individual and distinctive character. But first, you must find it.

"Learn it and learn it, for everything is within it," is Ben Bag Bag's bon mot as recorded in Pirkei Avot. He was referring to the Torah, in all its glory.

Studying Pirkei Avot at this time of year is one of the ways we can "learn it" and find "within it" a motto for life that will truly bring life. For, as it says in Proverbs, "It is a tree of life for all who hold onto it."

(from <http://www.lchaimweekly.org/>)

The Mitzvah To 'Be Holy' Was Given in a Mass Gathering

Parshas Kedoshim begins with the words "Hashem spoke to Moshe saying: Speak to the entire assembly of the Children of Israel (kol adas bnei Yisrael) and say to them: 'Kedoshim tihiyu (You shall be holy)'" [Vayikra 19:1-2]. Rashi points out that the uncommon inclusion of the phrase "the entire assembly of the Children of Israel" in the standard phrase "Speak to the Children of Israel..." teaches us that this mitzvah was specifically given in the presence of the entire assembly of Israel (b'hakhel).

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There is a famous disagreement among the early commentaries as to exactly what is meant by the mitzvah “You shall be holy.” Rashi interprets the mitzvah as one of abstinence—“You shall be removed from arayos (forbidden sexual union) and from sin.” The word “Kadosh” literally means “separate.” When we say “Kadosh, Kadosh, Kadosh” about Hashem, we are emphasizing his separateness and uniqueness. Thus, the meaning of “You shall be Kedoshim” is “You shall be separated – from forbidden sins.”

The Ramban, in a famous argument with Rashi, says that “You shall be Kedoshim” has nothing to do with illicit sexual acts. Rather, Kedoshim tihiyu refers to perfectly permissible activities. The concept is “sanctify yourself by withdrawing from that which is permissible to you” (kadesh atzmecha b’mutar lach). That Ramban declares that without such self-limitation, a person can be a ‘naval b’rshus haTorah’ (a glutton ‘sanctioned’ by the Torah). The level of sanctity required by this pasuk is that which is achieved by a person who even somewhat restrains himself from those physical pleasures that the Torah permits.

The Chasam Sofer points out that whether we accept Rashi’s interpretation or the Ramban’s approach, the message of this mitzvah is one of abstinence. A person could perhaps erroneously come to the conclusion that the only way to achieve this level of sanctity would be to lock himself on the top of a mountain in a monastery. We might think that a person should ideally have nothing to do with people; that a person should not get married and should have nothing to do with the opposite gender at all. The Torah therefore makes clear that the “holiness” of a monk is not desirable. This mitzva was specifically delivered “b’hakhel”. Everyone was present—the men, the women, and the children.

A person must be a Kadosh (a holy person), but must be a Kadosh in the context of the congregation and the community. A person must get married and must raise children. A person must play with his kids and spend time with his family and be a part of the community. The Torah wants the holiness of complete human beings.

The Kotzker Rebbe used to stress “MEN of holiness you shall be to Me” (Shemos 22:30). “G-d is not looking for more angels.” The Torah was not given to angels (Brachos 25b). It was given to human beings who have wants and desires and are social animals. It is in that context that we are commanded to develop holiness.

Therefore, specifically Kedoshim tihiyu, of all mitzvos, was relayed in a mass public gathering, to emphasize that despite our obligation to achieve holiness through a certain degree of abstinence, it must be in the context of the community, our wives, our children, and our neighbors.

(by Rabbi Yissocher Frand from Project Genesis at www.torah.org)

Yahrzeits This Week:			
Rabbi Fred Lewin	8 Iyar - Friday night / Shabbat	for brother	Yoel ben Shmuel
Marvin Itzkowitz	11 Iyar - Monday night / Tuesday	for father	Chaim Dov ben Yosef Tzvi

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DAVENING AND SHIURIM SCHEDULE	
Friday, 4/28 — 7 Iyar Shacharit — 7:00 a.m. Minchah / Ma’ariv — 7:00 p.m. Shabbat, 4/29 — 8 Iyar Shacharit — 9:00 a.m. Sof Z’man Kriat Shema — 9:35 a.m. Minchah — 7:25 p.m. Shiur — after Minchah Ma’ariv — 8:40 p.m. Sunday, 4/30 — 9 Iyar Shacharit — 8:00 a.m. Minchah / Ma’ariv — 7:45 p.m. Monday, 5/1 — 10 Iyar Shacharit — 6:50 a.m. Minchah / Ma’ariv — 7:45 p.m.	Tuesday, 5/2 — 11 Iyar Shacharit — 7:00 a.m. Minchah / Ma’ariv — 7:45 p.m. Wednesday, 5/3 — 12 Iyar Shacharit — 7:00 a.m. Minchah / Ma’ariv — 7:45 p.m. Thursday, 5/4 — 13 Iyar Shacharit — 6:50 a.m. Minchah / Ma’ariv — 7:45 p.m. Friday, 5/5 — 14 Iyar Shacharit — 7:00 a.m. Shabbat Candles — 7:45 p.m. Minchah / Ma’ariv — 7:00 p.m.