

Flowers of the East

A collection of moral and theological principles, proverbs, rules of social life, allegories and tales taken from the Talmud and contemporary writings

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(A selection)

A b r a h a m B u c h n e r

Introduction

(I) In order to make this collection of Talmudic stories finding their readers among the Christians, who usually despise what comes from these sources, I consider it necessary to say something about the Tradition. It is the lore that has existed with the Jewish people for a very long time, not only in the Holy Scriptures, but that also passed from one person to another, and only after the dispersion of the nation, was gathered in Books that constitute this enormous work called Talmud, which in Hebrew means "Learning". These traditional stories, as the reader will soon see, are not only necessary for a better understanding of many places in the Old Testament, but they have contributed significantly to the general education as well.

(VI. 9) For example a fact, acknowledged as certain by all theologians, that the mother of the mortals was deceived by the evil spirit in appearance of a snake, is not to be found in any

Biblical book of the Old Testament. This explanation was preserved merely in the rabbinic scriptures of the Tradition: Pirka Rabbi Eliezer and the Treatise Juma.

(XXI) (...) While delivering my work to public judgement, I wish it finds attentive readers, make friendship among my co-believers and the Christians. It should offer, to the first of them, the defence against all the slander thrown on the principles of their religion. It should finally prove that the followers of the Talmud are able, also under another authority, to fulfil every duty of subjects and righteous citizens.

Let the time come in which the believers of both religions not only in words but also in practical life treat each other as brethren.

TRACTATE BERAHOTH

2. Rabbi Eliazer used to end the prayer with following words: “God Almighty! In our estates allow brotherly love, friendship, peace and social life to reign, and let our expectations come true, that the number of our pupils be multiplied. Let us participate in the future salvation, give us for our own improvement good co-learners and lead us to goodness, in order that in the morning we feel our hearts disposed to piety. Fulfil our wishes if they really aim at our good.”

7. Abaja used to say: “Let piety always be accompanied by the knowledge of worldly manners. – Try, with gentle words, to pacify a person full of wrath. – Live in harmony with your fellow beings, relatives, in brief with all, also with the people you don’t know, in order to be liked in heaven, respected on earth, and well received in society. The story goes that Rabbi Jochanen greeted at once everybody he met in the street, even if it was a believer of another religion.” (17.1)

11. If someone took a sincere intention of doing a good thing and cannot fulfil it because of unforeseen obstacles, then good will counts as the deed itself.

17. The wicked ones can already in their lifetime be called dead, and the virtuous ones can even

after their death, be called living.

19. A prayer is more welcome by God than a sacrifice.

31. Don't be vehement and you will avoid wickedness.

33. A prayer to God should have only a few words.

35. A human waking in the morning should pray the following prayer: Thou hast bestowed me, God, with a pure soul of your creation. Thou hast put it in me and sustained it in my body. You will divide body and soul from one another and Thou will render it to me at the Resurrection. Be adored, God, returning life to the dead.

36. To look with an impure eye even at a small finger of a woman, is already a sin.

37. At a dangerous place one should pray the following abridged prayer: "Let Thy eternal will stay high in the heaven; move away from Thy worshippers what disturbs their pious intentions. We entrust ourselves to Thy goodness". According to the others, the formula of an abridged prayer is the following one: Our needs are so great, that I cannot articulate them all. Oh, eternal God! Give everybody what he or she needs the most.

46. Once Rabbis present at a wedding asked Rabbi Hammun to start singing. He answered: "Oh woe, we have to die, oh woe, we have to die!" "And what should we sing in response to that?" – asked the ones present. "Sing on", he answered them, "Are the commandments not our shield?"

51. A bow not returned can be treated as a theft.

53. One sincere regret in the heart prevails over a hundred of corporal mortifications.

TRACTATE SHABBATH

59. It is better to support a poor person with a loan than with alms, the best is to advise him on the way to earn a living.

71. While explaining the Bible one has to consider the grammar in particular.

72. If somebody wants to be wicked, God will not disturb him, but he provides support to a virtuous one.

79. Some learning from the Holy Scriptures can be given to the whole nation, some have to be kept secret and given only to the chosen.

80. It was said in the Holy Scriptures, in Exodus: “Let no foreign God be with you”. It means, says a Rabbi: “Chase away gods dwelling in you, the passions.”

84. A gentile came to Rabbi Hillel and declared, he wanted to convert to the Mosaic religion, but under one condition: if he can be taught all the Law while standing on just one foot. Rabbi Hillel answered: “What is hateful to thee, do not do unto thy fellow; this is the whole Law. All the rest is a commentary to this Law”.

93. It rarely happens that one is impartial towards oneself.

JERUSALEMER TALMUD

117. Even in the seventh year one has to piously pray for rain, as in other years, because although the Israelites don't need it, it could be useful for other nations.

129. A Rabbi quoted in his speech for the funeral of the late Rabbi Simon the following from the Book of Job: “Surely there is a vein for silver, and a place for gold where they refine it. Iron is taken out of the earth, and brass is molten out of stone”, and wisdom, where does it come from? Where is the seat of the intellect? The Holy Scriptures lead us here to consider the difference

between the four so useful ores and wisdom. If we lose the first ones, we can find them anywhere else; but the death of a sage (...) cannot be compensated so easily.

TRACTATE TANIS

143. A surgeon, with the name of Ale, had a place behind his consulting room, where the fee for his medical care was to be laid. This was for the reason that nobody could know whether or not somebody had paid him, and then a poor person without money would not be ashamed to consult the doctor. Well, the doctor actually supported the poor ones after they had endured an operation.

145. Why is it said (Proverbs 3. 18) of the Law: “It is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon it”. Therefore, as a small splinter can set a big tree on fire, so a mediocre head can sharpen the intellect of a wise man. For that reason Rabbi Jochun used to say: “I have learned a lot from my teachers, much more from my colleagues, and the most from my students”. Therefore, subsequently (Isaiah 55. 1), the learning of the Law is compared with water coming down, dampening the lower parts, so learning the Law enlightens only the humble ones.

148. When the community is overcome with grief, every single human being should share it. Then nobody will be allowed to say: What’s that to me? I shall go home and enjoy the happiness of its abundance. – Being created for social life, one should strive for a general good and the misery of the community should concern him as his own.

149. Young scientists are by nature a little vehement; therefore they should try to be gentle.

150. Be quick in buying an estate, and slow in marrying.

TRACTATE PIRKEI AVOT

153. Moses received the Law¹ on Mount Sinai and transmitted it to Jozue; Jozue left it to

¹ By “Law” Rabbis understand not only the Books of Moses, but also oral laws, it means the Talmud.

the Elders,² these have passed it to the prophets, and those to the members of the Great Assembly.³ The assembly had three principles: not to be fast in deciding the affairs,⁴ to educate many pupils,⁵ to sharpen the Law.⁶

158. Jozua, disciple of Joze, used to say: Attempt to find a teacher, acquire a friend and judge everyone by their good side.

163. Avtalion, disciple of Joze and Nithaja, used to say: Sages, be careful in your learning; you cannot know when it will be your turn to wander, and you could fall into a place where there is impure water. If your students drink it, they will die, and the name of the Lord would be profaned.

175. Hillel used to say: Don't detach yourself from society, and don't trust yourself till the day of dying. Don't blame your fellow being if you never were in his situation. Don't give your lecture incomprehensibly, hoping that it will be understood sometime later. Don't put aside your learning for tomorrow because who knows if you will ever have a tomorrow.

176. The same said: A stupid one doesn't know how to avoid sin. One who is unaware of the Law cannot be pious, a timid soul will rarely learn anything thoroughly, a passionate one is unsuitable to be a teacher, and one who is too busy with commerce will seldom be an expert on the Law. At a place where able people are lacking, try to be one.

179. Rabbi Jochanan son of Zakai, disciple of Hillel and Shammai used to say: When you have learned much, don't be conceited, because you were created to learn much.

181. The same once asked once his disciples: consider and tell me, what leads one on the way to goodness, the way a person should go? Rabbi Elezer said: a good eye, Rabbi Jozue said: a good

² Elders, it means those who lived a long time after him, from them the tradition was transferred to the next older generations and further on, to Eli and Samuel that open the series of prophets.

³ When the Israelites left the Babylonian Captivity Ezdrah established a synod comprising 120 members, of whom he was the leader. This synod is called by the Israelites Kneseth ha-gdola, it means Great Assembly. The learned Christians call it "synagogue": *synagoga magna*.

⁴ Even in the cases that had already frequently happened, one should not decide carelessly.

⁵ Some Rabbis accepted only pupils, of whose virtuousness and good manners they were convinced. The members of the synagogue, instead, wanted everybody who only did not have a bad reputation, to be admitted to learning.

⁶ It means that more should be prohibited than the Law demands, in order that it couldn't be broken so easily. Here you can quote activities that, although prohibited on the Shabbath, are not punished. The Talmud calls them "shvus".

friend, Rabbi Jose said: a good neighbour, Rabbi Simon said: the habit at every undertaking to take care of consequences that can result. Rabbi Elezer said: a good heart. Thereupon said the teacher: I value the opinion of Rabbi Elezer more than all the others because it comprises all your opinions.

193. Rabbi Simon used to say: If three people eating at one table don't talk about subjects of the Law, they are treated as if they were eating sacrifices of the idols. As the prophet Isaiah says (28. 8): "Their tables are full of vomit and filthiness", and they are thinking of God. But if three people eating at one table talk about subjects of the Law, they have to be treated as if they were eating at God's table as the prophet Ezekiel 41. 22 says: "This is the table that is before the Lord".

194. Rabbi Chanina ben Chachin used to say: one who is vigilant by night or travelling alone and is occupied with useless matters, is himself the cause of his ruin.

199. Rabbi Disthai ben Janai used to say in the name of Rabbi Meyer: one who forgot a part of what he learned, of such a person the Holy Scriptures say, that he alone is the perpetrator of his ruin, because in the Holy Scriptures (Deuteronomy 4.) it is said: "Only take heed of thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen". In order that you wouldn't mean that it is referring also to the case of one who with difficulty remembers what he learned, the Holy Scriptures say at this place further on: "and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life". This teaches us that only then should one ascribe a guilt to somebody, if he voluntarily expels the Law from his heart.

201. Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa used to say: One who cares for good deeds more than for prescriptions of wisdom, has lasting wisdom; but one who is more interested in prescriptions of wisdom, and fulfils fewer good deeds, has only passing wisdom.

202. The same used to say: one who is respected by people, pleases God, and one who is not, cannot please God.

212. Rabbi Benzoma used to say: Really wise is only that one who knows to receive the learning from everybody, as it is said in the Book of Psalms: "I have more understanding than all my teachers". A real hero is only that one who knows to rein his passions. Of such a one says Salomon in his Proverbs (16. 32): "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit is better than he that taketh a city". Really rich is that one who is content with what he has,

as King David says in his Psalms (128.2): “For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands; happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee”. *H a p p y* - means happiness in this worldly life, and *b e w e l l w i t h t h e e* – means the future life. Really worthy of high esteem is only that one who esteems his fellow beings, as it is told in the Holy Scriptures (1 Samuel 2. 30): “for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed”.

218. Rabbi Zadok used to say: -Don't make a crown out of learning to make you arrogant, nor a shovel to dig with it. Already Hillel said: -One who uses the crown for his own interest perishes. From this you can recognize that one who exploits learning as a way of living, tears himself away from the world.

226. Rabbi Elazar ben Shamsa used to say: Let the honour of your disciple be as dear as your own honour; let the honour of your co-disciple be close to the honour of your teacher, and the honour of your teacher close to the honour of God.

227. Rabbi Jehuda used to say: Be cautious in learning, because a mistake committed in it can be treated as an intentional crime.

229. Rabbi Nechoraj used to say: Always go to the place where there is knowledge, don't think it will follow you, or that your co-disciples will keep it for you; trust your own intellect still less.⁷

237. Rabbi Joze son of Jehuda used to say: One who learns from young people resembles the one who eats unripe grapes and drinks a young wine; but one who learns from the old ones, resembles the one who is eating ripe grapes and drinks an old wine.

238. Rabbi Meyer used to say: Don't watch the jug but watch its contents. There are many new jugs full of old wine, and many old jugs in which there is even no young wine.

241. Quadruple is the way of thinking among the people. Some say: what is mine, is mine, and what is yours is yours. This the popular way of thinking and, according to some people, a Sodomite one.

⁷ The idea is that if there is no teacher in your town, you should go to another town with a teacher. But don't think that even if you stay there, the co-disciples, returning to your native town, could repeat the lectures of the teachers to you as exactly as you yourself would have heard the lectures.

Others say: what is mine, is yours, and what is yours is mine. This is an incompetent way of thinking. Others say: what is mine, is yours, and what is yours belongs also to you. So think the pious ones. There are still those who say: what is mine, is mine, and what is yours, also belongs to me. So say the impious ones.

243. Among the students there are four qualities. There are those who comprehend easily and forget quickly, they lose their merits because of their faults. There are those who comprehend with difficulty and forget with difficulty, they compensate for their faults by their merits. To comprehend easily and to forget with difficulty, is the gift of a happy one. To comprehend with difficulty and to forget easily, is a great disaster.

245. Fourfold are the objectives of visiting the houses of learning. The one goes there and does nothing, the merit of this is that he at least went. The other one does not go but does something at home, this one has the merit of being active. The one who goes there and does something, is pious; the one who doesn't go and doesn't do anything is impious.

247. Love based on vain and passing things ends as soon as they end. Love that is not based on these things lasts forever. Which love is vain? For example, the love of Amnon towards Tamar (Book of Samuel 13). An example of an everlasting love is the one between David and Jonat.

248. Disputes that were initiated for a noble cause, always bring some profit. But the ones whose objective is less noble, end badly. What are the noble disputes? Such disputes as those between Hillel and Shammai, ignoble were those as between Korach and his squad.

249. One who leads society to good, will be saved from sin. But one who leads it to sin, will not be allowed penance. Moses was virtuous and led other people to virtue, therefore merits of other people were added to his own virtues, because it is written that "He was doing divine justice, and his was righteousness". Irabam ben Nebal was a sinner and induced other people to sin, therefore the sins of the others were added to his own, as is written in the Book 2 (14. 16). For the sins of Jerobam that they have committed, for the sins that Israel committed through him.

TRACTATE

RABI NATAN

254. Zeal in studying the Law is very laudable, and the knowledge of how to deal with people is the highest wisdom.

257. True learning brings us to doing charity.

258. When some of your friends rebuke you, and some flatter you, join the former.

259. We should care as much for the honour of our fellow beings as for our own honour.

TRACTATE

EURUBIN, MEGILA, PSACHIM, CHAGIGAA, ROSHASHUN,

JUMA B E I C E

264. When the Egyptians drowned Angels wanted to intone a hymn. God told them: my creatures perished and I have to listen to hymns?

269. Don't dispute on things the imagination boggles at.

273. Rabbi Jussi used to say: God judges humans daily. Rabbi Nussen added: even every moment.

281. On feasts you should dedicate half a day to religious services, and a second half you can pass on innocent entertainment.

282. A teacher should explain thoroughly and clearly scientific subjects to his disciple.

283. Neither a proud nor a too worldly human can have a grounded knowledge

285. Let no nonsense leave your mouth.

288. We should respect the one who is superior to us in any positive feature.

301. A scholar who is not so as he superficially seems to be, is not a true scholar.

310. Don't enter your own house unexpectedly, the more so don't enter a foreign house so.

TRACTATE

**BAVA KAMA, BAVA MECYE, BAVA BATRA, SANHEDRIN,
EBUET, ABODA ZARA AND HUREYET**

331. Divine wisdom caused us all to come from one man only, in order that nobody should take pride in his descent and nobody would rise above another one.

356. Punishment of a liar is that even the truth proclaimed by him will not be believed.

TAANE DBE EILAEH

444. Six days of the week God determined we should work, and the seventh day rest, in order that we could use it to edify our soul.

MIDRASH RABBA

479. The day of birth provides us for dying, the day of death provides us for living.

485. At common happiness, a greater friendship usually reigns among citizens.

488. We find in the Holy Scriptures: "The day of death is better than the day of birth." The reason for this is, as a Rabbi explains: at the time of bringing a human being into the world we cannot yet know, what he will do, and only at the time of dying do we see all his deeds in a clear light. These

two opposites can be compared with two ships, one of which sails out from the harbour into the sea, and the other one arrives there after a long journey. To see it returning surely gives a reasonable person more joy than the first one, because the returning ship already endured all the dangers threatening at sea.

513. In Mesopotamia people became addicted to debauchery and idleness. “I don’t want to live here”, exclaimed Abraham. When he came to Palestine and saw how ardently the inhabitants worked on the land, he declared: “I want to be a citizen of this country”. “Once this land will belong to your descendants”, the divine echo answered him.

528. One who has intellect lacks nothing, but lack of intellect cannot be compensated by anything.

531. People practicing the same craft usually hate one another, among real scholars friendship and harmony reign.

535. Features of the face change according to thoughts.

540. Why does a man woo a wife, and a woman never a husband? The answer is easy: a man looks for his loss, a woman does not feel such a need because she is missing nothing.

548. The Holy Scriptures compare the divine Law among other things to water, for the following reasons:

a) As water drops and forms streams, similarly a human being learns slowly, to finally become a scholar.

b) As water tastes good to a thirsty one, so the Law pleases only those who find liking in it and who strive to strengthen it in themselves.

c) One who does not know how to swim drowns, so similarly the one who does not know the Law thoroughly disappears in its abyss.

MEDRASH THILIM

559. After the destruction of the Temple many Israelites wanted to renounce meat and wine. Rabbi

Jona asked them why? “How can we” – Israelites exclaimed – “now consume this food that once was daily brought to the Shrine of God as sacrifice?” “According to you” – answered the Rabbi – “you should also not eat bread, because on Shabbath the Showbread was offered in the Shrine to honor God. Even more so, you should as well drink no water because water was used in the Shrine for religious ceremonies. Hence you should not exaggerate. In general, stick to the principal: you should never establish religious laws that are too cumbersome.

566. The Psalmist says: “God loves the righteous one”. Why does God especially love the righteous one? Because righteousness is a personal merit, not a hereditary one, as is the dignity of priests and Levites. For the dignity of priests is an exclusive property of Aaron’s generation, but to please God through righteousness is a common good of all the people, even of heathens.

568. God says to the people: you have served me according to your forces, and I shall reward you according to mine.

569. A Persian king was going to die: “There is only one remedy that could rescue his life, if he drinks the milk of a lioness”, said the physicians. One of his slaves took it upon himself to go to the lioness’ cave, on the condition he would be permitted to take ten goat kids with him. With these went the faithful slave to the lions’ cave and found her feeding her brood. He threw her one kid daily, and so he tamed her so far that he managed to milk her a little. When he returned home and lay down to sleep, he saw the parts of his body quarrelling. The legs claimed the success of the undertaking was due to them because without them he could not go there and come back. “How’s that” – called the hands – “it was we who dared to reach for the milk of the cruel animal”. “The successful outcome of the undertaking is due to us”, called the eyes. “If we would had not shown you the way, you would not have found it”. “The priority is my merit” - declared the heart - “it’s I that prompted the idea”. To which the tongue answered: “How mistaken you are, without me nothing could happen”. Thereupon all the body parts exclaimed surprised: “What impertinence! How dare you compare yourself with us, you, who are hidden and not furnished with bones as we are”. “Still today you will see” – said the tongue – “that it’s I who is the proper king of the body parts”. The slave awoke from his dream and went on feeling fearful. Having arrived before the king he said: “Oh king, with God’s help I brought you the milk of a doe”. “Execute the wretched one!” – exclaimed the king in rage. The royal order was going to be fulfilled immediately. The parts of the body began to weep when they heard it. “How’s that” – said the tongue. “If I succeed in saving

you, will you admit that I am your king?” “Yes” – answered all members. “Bring me to the king”, called the slave, and this happened without delay. When he was brought before the king, he asked what was the reason of this death sentence. “Because you, rascal, wanted to shorten my life with a doe’s milk”, answered the king. “I erred” – said the slave – “it is the milk of a lioness. Deign the king to convince himself”. And it was revealed to be true, so the sentence was withdrawn. “Now we confess – called all body parts – that you are our king”.

SECOND COLLECTION

569/a. Perhaps God does not bestow wealth on some scholars so that it will not be a hindrance to their studies.

598. To progress in virtue means to worship God.

605. Character, facial lines and voice are three main features adorning people.

623. It is better to be ashamed of oneself than be shamed by others.

630. Always know by whom you are sitting and to whom you are talking.

651. Peace is the principle of happiness.

652. One who neglects learning, will regret it.

665. A heathen asked Rabbi Jozue: What is God occupied with after the creation of the world? He makes ladders. For the Holy Scriptures say: God is the judge, he raises some and humiliates the others.

669. Once a learned Talmudist saw a man climbing a tree on which there was a nest with birds. He took the mother and the brood with him and went down without the least harm. Some days later he saw another one who took only the brood and set the mother free. Hardly being down he was

bitten by a snake and died. “What injustice I see” – called the learned man. “To the last one the Law promises long life and happy days, yet he died by the venom of a damned snake, but the first one acted against instructions of the Law and escaped the danger”. This event made such an impression on his mind that he negated the divine rules of the Law and since then did not obey its regulations. In this connection the Midrash makes a remark that the learned man did not understand the phrases “long life” and “happy days” properly because secular life is neither long nor happy. The Law speaks of future life.

672. Once a man appeared before a Rabbi to give witness against a fellow being, accusing him of committing a wicked deed. The Rabbi declared: You are as wicked as the accused one because, knowing that the testimony of one witness does not have judicial worth, you became a slanderer.

676. If silence is becoming to the wise, how much more becoming it is to the stupid.

677. It is not the place that does honour to a person, but the person does honour to the place by occupying it.

681. How insensible and unmoved is one aided by God.

682. If destiny plagues a wicked one, sometimes also his neighbour suffers; if a virtuous one is prospering, also his neighbour benefits.

683. The praiseworthy conduct of a person can be acknowledged to him partly, never completely.

686. A small flute (piccolo), considered a pleasant instrument by some respectable persons, does not please weavers.

703. A prayer should be held with piety and without shouts.

710. God therefore derived the whole human family from Adam to teach us that whoever rescues a single life earns as much merit as though he had rescued the entire world. And according to this principle God punishes a person who causes somebody else to die.

715. Scholars who are absent from their families during feasts, deserve blame.

716. Only these religions are true whose reality can be proved on the basis of the Holy Scriptures.

719. The Mosaic Law prohibits mistreating animals.

722. The laws practiced in a country are obligatory also for Israelites.

728. No man of any nation is condemned by God, the gates of salvation are open for everybody, as the Holy Scriptures say: “I open the gates to everybody”.

730. God is the light of all worlds.⁸

733. You should not tease your wife with sarcastic words because the female gender is affectionate and easily moved to tears, and God does not let such behaviour go unpunished.

735. The working class renders to the society a service equal to that of the learned class, claim some Rabbis.

740. Every salutary knowledge coming from anyone, should be respected as a Mosaic one.

741. Talk to your fellow beings so as you think of them.

743. If you are learning something but you do not understand it, don't be ashamed to say: “Repeat it, please”.

744. One has to treat all people in the same way, whether they are Israelites or not: to visit them when they are ill, to bury them when they die. And that with the idea of living together with them in unity and harmony.

⁸ Light is in the Holy Scriptures image of happiness, of sciences and of life. In all these three circumstances you can say of God that he is the Light of the World, without which there is no happiness. In the religion revealed by Him there is a truly salutary knowledge. Finally He is the source of life: everything has its beginning and its sustenance in Him.

748. Since the increase of conceit, quarrels have also taken place in the Laws of Isaiah.⁹

749. Be mute among people offending you, do not be an indifferent listener to the subjects concerning divine commandments, but also then let your words be modest and pleasing.

752. Moses asked God for His name, God answered him: “Why do you want to know my name; my name fits my deeds”.

753. Poor people are plagued by poverty.

764. Grapes have to pray all the time for the prosperity of their leaves.¹⁰

782. There was a habit with ancient pious ones: to enter in oneself for a while before praying, in order to prepare their heart for piety.

785. Rabbi Simon comments on the passage: “Whoso rewardeth evil for good, evil shall not depart from his house”, that it refers to the ones who reward evil with evil. But the Holy Law of Moses orders us to do good also to our enemies.

788. Many people are sad leaving this world without having had children; but if they fulfilled good deeds, these are enough to bring them comfort.

790. You should not give sermons to people who do not like them.

792. One who possesses wisdom will have this wisdom increase.¹¹

Selected by Antoni Buchner

English consultant: Judith Wickstroem-Haber

⁹ Proud disciples thought they did not need much attention to comprehend learning.

¹⁰ Grapes are the image of the learned class, leaves are the image of workers and merchants. To use the knowledge of the Law to improve one's secular life, is treated by Talmudists as an insult of divine Laws.

¹¹ It means, one who loves wisdom and desires it; because the will to acquire wisdom is considered to be almost the same as possessing it.