

# Pirkei Avot 1

## Translation

Moshe received *Torah* from Sinai and transmitted it to Joshua, Joshua to the Elders, and the Elders to the prophets, and the Prophets transmitted it to the members of the Great Assembly. They said three things: be cautious in judgment, raise up many students, and make a fence for the Torah.

## Maimonides

I have already explained in the introduction to this commentary the description of the tradition how it came about. The intention

here is specifically to elucidate the words of the sages and pious ones and to motivate the acquiring of some of the virtues which have great benefit; and so to go on at length to warn about the vices which cause great damage. For the rest, I will elucidate just the words and some of the content because the content is clearly explained, with few exceptions. **Be Cautious**

**in Judgment:** They should delay in determining judgment; they should not render a decision hastily, until they really understand it. It is possible that things will be revealed to them that were not apparent at the beginning. **Make a Fence Around the Torah:** He means: the decrees and ordinances that keep a person far from transgressions. As the Blessed One said: "And guard what is mine to guard" (Lv 18:30), which is explained: "Make a guardian around My guard." (Yevamot 21a)

## Rabbi David Rosenfeld (Torah.org)

"Moses received the Torah from Sinai..." The Sages here speak with the same authority they do throughout the entire Mishna. Their statements here may seem just plain old good advice -- the same we may find in any other Dale Carnegie-type self-help book. But let us not for a moment think that the Sages of the Mishna are no longer bearers of a sacred tradition in this capacity . . . They are speaking nothing less than the word of G-d.

## Talmud

Rabbi Yochanan said: "One who has learned Torah but has not taught it others is like a myrtle standing in the desert." (Rosh HaShanah 23a)

Rabbi Chaninah said: "I have learned much from my teachers, more from my colleagues, and most from my students." (Taanit 7a)

מֹשֶׁה קִבֵּל תּוֹרָה מִסִּינַי,  
וּמִסֵּרָהּ לְיְהוֹשֻׁעַ, וְיְהוֹשֻׁעַ  
לְזִקְנִים, וְזִקְנִים לְנְבִיאִים,  
וְנְבִיאִים מִסֵּרוּהָ לְאַנְשֵׁי כְּנֶסֶת  
הַגְּדוּלָּה. הֵם אָמְרוּ שְׁלֹשָׁה  
דְּבָרִים, הָיוּ מְתוּנִים בְּדִין,  
וְהֶעֱמִידוּ תַלְמִידִים הַרְבֵּה,  
וַעֲשׂוּ סִיג לַתּוֹרָה:

## Paul Forchheimer (p. 23)

To find the truth, we must not jump to conclusions, but weigh each argument carefully. The more students who are instructed and qualified, the better the chance that the truth be preserved and elaborated upon. But even so, ordinary life makes additional safeguards necessary to keep the Torah itself unbreached.