

PIRKEI AVOT 2-6

Translation:

He used to say: A boor cannot be pious (lit. Fearer of Sin). An ignorant person cannot be pious. A shy person cannot learn. A stubborn person cannot teach. An impatient person cannot teach. Not everyone who multiply business can become wise. In a place where there are no "men," strive to be a "man."

Maimonides

The empty man is one who does not have either wisdom or [moral] attributes. The ignorant man is one who does not have

intellectual virtues but has some moral virtues. The diffident man, as understood. The

impatient man is he who is exacting in all matters and is given to anger. The meaning of "hishtadel-strive":

habituate your soul and draw it to acquire the virtues. Since there are

no wise men there who may instruct you, you be the one who instructs yourself. The Targum renders "va'yeyaveyk ish imo--and a man wrestled with him" as "v'ishtadal gavra imo--and a man strove with him." [With reference to . . . and not all who engage much in commerce become wise.] They said: [Knowledge of] the Torah will not be found in proud and haughty men nor in those who journey to distant lands. They juxtaposed this with a verse from the standpoint of an allegory; as it was said, "It is not in heaven that you should say [who will ascend...], Nor is it beyond the sea...," they said: It is not in the haughty nor is it in those who journey beyond the sea.

Rav Chaim of Volozhin

(As Read by Chanoch Levi in "Ruach Chaim")

A bashful person cannot learn. "The fool does not desire understanding, unless he reveals his heart" (Mishlei 18:2). Unless we see him ask questions and acknowledge that he does not understand, we must conclude that he is a fool who does not desire understanding. An impatient person cannot teach. His

students are unwilling to ask questions, as they are afraid of his reaction. Moreover, when the teacher answers with impatience, the students will not accept his answers. In a place where

there are no men, exert yourself to be a man. It is beneficial to occasionally distance yourself from human company in order to meditate. Even when you are alone and no man sees you, strive to act like a man, for Hashem sees all.

Reuven Hammer (Or Chadash)

Not "be a worthy person," but "strive to be a worthy person, a mensch." Be courageous and try to do that which is right.

הוּא הָיָה אוֹמֵר, אֵין בּוֹר יָרָא
חֲטָא, וְלֹא עִם הָאֶרֶץ חֲסִיד,
וְלֹא הַבֵּישׁוֹן לָמַד, וְלֹא הַקְּפָדוֹן
מְלַמֵּד, וְלֹא כָּל הַמְרַבֵּה
בְּסַחוּרָה מִחֲכִים. וּבְמִקּוֹם
שֶׁאֵין אֲנָשִׁים, הִשְׁתַּדַּל לְהִיּוֹת
אִישׁ :