

PIRKEI AVOT 2-5

Translation:

Hillel says: Do not withdraw from the community and do not trust in yourself until the day of your death, and do not judge your fellow until you reach his place, and do not say something that is impossible to hear, because in the end it is to be heard, and do not say that when I have leisure I will study, for you may never have leisure.

Maimonides

In the Fourth Chapter we have made known that one should not separate from the community except in accordance with their (i.e., its members') corruption, as we explained it there. He said that although a man may have a worthy disposition in his soul which has become firm, in order to increase the firmness he should not withdraw his hand from repeating the practice of the good. Let him not trust and say, "I have achieved this virtue and it is impossible for it to depart," for it is possible

that it may depart, as it was said, *until the day of your death*. A word which cannot be understood means that the literal meanings of the words will be abstruse and vacuous, and when a man carefully reflects upon them he will perceive that the words are intelligible. He cautions against that manner of speech, for he said, let not your words require far-fetched interpretation and inordinate reflection that only then the listener will understand them. "When I have leisure ..." meaning thereby, when I will be at leisure from this endeavor. This is similar to what was previously stated in his colleague Shammai's counsel: Set a fixed time for your study of Torah."

Rav Chaim of Volozhin

(As Read by Chanoch Levi in "Ruach Chaim")
Do not separate yourself from the community. Do not separate yourself in material aspects and certainly not in spiritual pursuits. "I learned much from my teachers, more from my colleagues, and the most from my students" (*Makkos* 10a). In any communal gathering, there will be those present who could serve as your teacher, your colleague, or your

student. *Do not trust in yourself* Never feel so confident of your abilities that you may assume you can study alone without making an error in judgment. *Do not judge your fellow ... and do not say about a thing that it is impossible to be heard.* When studying

הִלֵּל אוֹמֵר, אַל תִּפְרוֹשׁ מִן
הַצְּבוּר, וְאַל תִּתְּמֵן בְּעֵצְמְךָ עַד
יוֹם מוֹתְךָ, וְאַל תִּדְּוֵן אֶת
חֵבְרֶךָ עַד שֶׁתִּגִּיעַ לְמִקוֹמוֹ, וְאַל
תֹּאמַר דְּבַר שְׂאֵי אֶפְשֶׁר
לְשִׁמוֹעַ שְׁסוּפוֹ לְהִשְׁמָע. וְאַל
תֹּאמַר לְכַשְׁאֶפְנָה אֶשְׁנָה, שְׂמָא
לֹא תִפְנֶה :

with a partner, do not automatically reject his logic. Think carefully about his approach; perhaps it will be "heard" and found accurate. *Do not say, When I am free I will learn.* Although it is certainly preferable to study Torah while in a state of spiritual perfection, do not wait to study until you have reached this level of freedom from sin. Torah study at any level is the only tool for overcoming the evil inclination and eventually achieving perfection. This we explained in *Avos* 2:1.