

PIRKEI AVOT 3-15

Translation

All is foreseen, yet authority/permission is given, and the world is judged by goodness, and everything [is reckoned/depends] on the multitude/majority of the deed.

Maimonides

This statement incorporates very important matters, and it is fitting that this statement be attributed to Rabbi Akiba. This is its explanation in brief, and it is offered on condition that you are aware of everything that was previously stated in the introductory chapters. He said, everything that is in the world is known before Him, may He be blessed, and He is conscious of it, as it was said: *All is foreseen*. ... Subsequently, he said, do not think that since He is cognizant of deeds that pre-determination would be [logically] imperative; that is to say that man would be coerced in his deeds with regard to any deed. Such is not the case; rather, the authority is in the power of man in what he may do, as it was said, *yet the authority is given*, meaning to say that every man is given authority, as we explained in the Eighth Chapter. [With reference to ... *and the world is judged by goodness*.] He said that the judgment of the Lord, may He be blessed, with men, is indeed through kindness and goodness, and not according to the judgment that is fitting for them. As the One to be blessed made clear from His ways, He said: ... long-suffering and abundant in kindness and truth ... (Ex 34:6), and our Rabbis, may their memory be blessed, said: Long-suffering to the righteous and to the wicked (Eiruvim 22a); and the prophet said: The Lord is good to all ... (Ps 145:) [With reference to ... *and everything is [reckoned] according to the multitude of the deed*.] Subsequently, he said that virtues will not be attained by a man according to the magnitude of the deed, but according to the multitude of the number of the deeds. That is, that virtues will indeed be attained by repeating the good deeds many times. With this [method] he will attain a firm trait - and not when a man performs a single major act of the good acts, for through this alone he will not attain a firm trait. The illustration of this: When a man gives to one who is deserving a thousand gold pieces all at once, [that is,] to one man, and he did not give anything to another man, he will not achieve the attribute of generosity through this single major deed, just as it is

attained by one who contributed a thousand gold pieces in a thousand instances, and gave all of those gold pieces from the standpoint of generosity. Inasmuch as this one repeated the practice of generosity a thousand times, he attained a firm trait, whereas that one, in only one instance was his soul powerfully stimulated toward a good act, and thereafter it (i.e., the stimulus) ceased from him. Thus, according to the Torah, the recompense for one who redeemed a captive for one hundred dinars, or dealt charitably toward a poor man to the extent of one hundred dinars which was sufficient for his need, is not on a par with the recompense for one who redeemed ten captives, or fulfilled the need of ten poor men, each to the extent of ten dinars. It is with this [illustration] that the analogy is made, and this is the meaning of his statement: ... *according to the multitude of the deed*, not, however, according to the magnitude of the deed.

Rav Chaim of Volozhin

(As Read by Chanoch Levi in "*Ruach Chaim*")
Everything is seen. Hashem witnesses the person sinning, yet He allows him to continue. *The world is judged with goodness, and everything depends on the majority of deeds*. Do not be concerned when you see the wicked enjoying peace and prosperity. They are being judged with this goodness. All their merits will be exhausted on the

הַכֹּל צָפוּי, וְהַרְשׁוּת נְתוּנָה,
וּבְטוֹב הָעוֹלָם נִדוּן. וְהַכֹּל לְפִי
רֵב הַמַּעֲשֵׂה:

temporary pleasures of this world, and nothing will remain to protect them from punishment in the next, permanent World (Dt 7:10). Why does Hashem act this way? Everything depends on the majority of deeds. As the Talmud explains, it is analogous to a tree which is standing in an impure place and whose branch reaches over a pure place. Once the limb is pruned, the entire tree is in the impure place. The wicked man is rooted in impurity but has a few merits to his credit. Hashem prunes the branch of his merits by rewarding him in this world, so that in the Next World he can be judged for what he truly is, a tree firmly rooted in impurity. The righteous man is like a tree which is standing in a pure place and whose branch reaches over an impure place. Hashem prunes the branch of his few sins by punishing him in this world, so that in the Next World he can be judged for what he truly is, a tree firmly rooted in purity (Kiddushin 40b).