

Some of the Things Judaism Has Taught Me About Life

Wisdom is free, yet it is also the most expensive thing there is, because we tend to acquire it through failure or disappointment or grief. That's why we try to share our wisdom, so that others won't have to pay the price for it that we paid. These are some of the things Judaism has taught me about life, and I share them with you:

- Never try to be clever. Always try to be wise.
- Respect others, even if they disrespect you.
- Never seek publicity for what you do. If you deserve it, you will receive it. If you don't, you will be attacked. In any case, goodness never needs to draw attention to itself.
- When you do good to others, it is yourself, your conscience and your self-respect, that will be the beneficiary. The greatest gift of giving is the opportunity to give.
- In life, never take shortcuts. There is no success without effort, no achievement without hard work.
- Keep your distance from those who seek honour. Be respectful, but none of us is called on to be a looking glass for those in love with themselves.
- In everything you do, be mindful that God sees all we do. There is no cheating God. When we try to deceive others usually the only person we succeed in deceiving is ourselves.
- Be very slow indeed to judge others. If they are wrong, God will judge them. If *we* are wrong, God will judge *us*.
- Greater by far than the love we receive is the love we give.
- It was once said of a great religious leader, that he was a man who took God so seriously that he never felt the need to take himself seriously at all. And that is worth aspiring to.
- Use your time well. Life is short, too short to waste on television, computer games and unnecessary emails; too short to waste on idle gossip, or envying others for what they have, too short for anger and indignation; too short to waste on criticising others. "Teach us to number our days", says the Psalm, "that we may get a heart of wisdom".¹ But any day on which you have done some good to someone has not been wasted.
- You will find much in life to distress you. People can be careless, cruel, thoughtless, offensive, arrogant, harsh, destructive, insensitive, and rude. But that is their problem, not yours. Your problem is how to respond. "No one", a wise lady once said, "can make you feel inferior without your permission".² The same applies to other negative emotions. Don't react. Don't respond. Don't feel angry, or if you do, pause for as long as it takes for the anger to dissipate, and then carry on with the rest of life. Don't hand others a victory over your own emotional state. Forgive, or if you can't forgive, just ignore.
- If you've tried and failed, don't feel bad. God forgives our failures as soon as we acknowledge them as failures – and that spares us from the self-deception of trying to see them as success. No one worth admiring ever succeeded without

¹ Psalms 90:12

² Eleanor Roosevelt, *This is My Story*

many failures on the way. The great poets wrote bad poems; the great artists painted undistinguished canvases; not every symphony by Mozart is a masterpiece. If you lack the courage to fail, then you lack the courage to succeed.

- Always seek out the friendship of those who are strong where you are weak. None of us has all the virtues. Even a Moses needed an Aaron. The work of a team, a partnership, a collaboration with others who have different gifts or different ways of looking at things, is always greater than any one individual can achieve alone.
- Create moments of silence in your soul if you want to hear the voice of God.
- If something is wrong, don't blame others. Ask, how can I help to put it right?
- Always remember that you create the atmosphere that surrounds you. If you want others to smile, you must smile. If you want others to give, you must give. If you want others to respect you, you must show your respect for them. How the world treats us is a mirror of how we treat the world.
- Be patient. Sometimes the world is slower than you are. Wait for it to catch up with you, because if you are on the right path, eventually it will.
- Never have your ear so close to the ground that you can't hear what an upright person is saying.
- Never worry when people say that you are being too idealistic. It is only idealistic people who change the world, and do you really want, in the course of your life, to leave the world unchanged?
- Be straight, be honest, and always do what you say you are going to do. There really is no other way to live.

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Watch the video here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=JK5ZJAs7YsQ&t=11s



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