

THE PATH OF THE JUST - CHAPTER 19:3

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

Here are some of the things that the pious souls whom we'd do well to emulate were known for. These instances are all cited in a section of the Talmud that discusses individuals who'd lived long lives and were asked by their admirers and students what they did to merit that (see Megillah 27-28).

The implication is that if you're kind and loving to G-d and His creatures, He will act that way to you by granting you long life, given that you'd enriched the lives of others and had allowed them peace and well-being.

We're taught that Rabbi Zakai would be sure not to do anything that would disturb or unnerve someone who was praying in close proximity to him despite his own needs, and that he'd never take a person's own sense-of-self lightly by calling him a nickname and making light of him that way (which was true of Rabbi Zairah as well). And he'd be sure to never miss making Kiddush on Shabbos, no matter the deterrent, though it would often have been costly to have wine, a proper cup, and a set table in his time.

Rabbi Elazar Ben Shamoah never showed anything but utter respect for and deference toward a synagogue or toward those praying there, despite any personal inconvenience.

Rabbi Predah was careful to always arrive early to the study-hall (presumably in order to set up a fire when that was called for, to prepare food and drink, to return books to the shelves, etc., aside from wanting to be there as early as possible to study). And he was sure to be respectful and deferential to a kohen as well as toward any of the requirements of the Holy Temple.

Rabbi Nechuniah was sure never to be "glorified by the shame of (his) friend", which is to say that he'd never try to enhance his own reputation on the back of anyone else's (which was also true of Rav Hunah), and he'd never carry a grudge but would forgive anyone who hurt him at the end of the day.

And Rabbi Zairah was as kind and considerate at home as we're careful to be among strangers, he always exhibited respect for Torah and for places it was studied, and he never reveled in anyone else's bad fortune.

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