

## Emulating the Tzaddik & The Bodhisattva

**Tokme Zongpo\***

**37 Practices: Verse 2**

(\*Tokme Zongpo was a 14th century Tibetan monk. After serving as abbot of his monastery, he retreated for 20 years and wrote 37 practices of a Bodhisattva, the core of Mahayana Buddhism.)

**Attraction to those close to you catches you in its currents;  
Aversion to those who oppose you burns inside;  
Indifference that ignores what needs to be done is a black hole.  
Leave your homeland—this is the practice of a bodhisattva.**

**Torah**

**Genesis 12:1**

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־אַבְרָם לֵךְ־לְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ  
אֲשֶׁר אֲרָאךָ:

And Havaya, the eternal Presence, said to Avram: *Lech*, Go forth into *Lecha*, yourself, from your land (*Artzecha*); and from your birthplace (*mi'Moladetcha*), and from the house of your ancestors (u-miBeit Avichah) to a land that I will show you.

**Commentary:** To get to *LECHA*, (to you) your deepest self and purpose, we, like Avram, must cut with three major influences, in increasing order of difficulty.

a. *may'Artzecha*: from your social environment, the friends, social setting, and general culture that hold you back from your holiness.

b. *mi'Moladetcha*: from the traits and habits implanted from your family, those beliefs that would have you stop short of the journey and stay home in your comfort zone and not stretch or venture forth into the unknown.

c. *mi'Beit Avichah*: Most difficult: You must separate yourself from the *p'gamim ha-nimshachiim may hahorim*: the patterns you inherited from your parents, that would stop you from surpassing them.

—The Slonomer Rebbe (R. Shalom Noah Berezovsky

1911-2000)

**37 Practices: Verse 3**

**Don't engage disturbances and emotional reactions gradually fade away;**

**Don't engage distractions and spiritual practice naturally grows.**

**Keep awareness clear and vivid and confidence in the way arises.**

**Rely on silence—this is the practice of a bodhisattva.**

**Commentary:** (U)sing breath or awareness itself as a place to rest.  
Whenever you are carried away, return and rest.

—Ken Mcleod

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## Mishneh Avot

## Chapter I: Mishnah 17

שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּנוֹ אוֹמֵר, כָּל יְמֵי גְדֻלְתִּי בֵּין הַחֲכָמִים, וְלֹא מִצָּאתִי לְגוֹף טוֹב אֶלָּא שְׁתִּיקָה. וְלֹא הַמְדַרְשׁ הוּא הָעֵקֶר, אֶלָּא הַמַּעֲשֵׂה. וְכָל הַמְרַבֵּה דְבָרִים, מִבִּיא חֲטָא:

**Shimon\* son of Gamliel, used to say: All my days I grew up among the Sages, and I have found nothing better for a person than silence. Study is not the most important thing, rather, action is. Excessive talk leads to delusion and error.**

**Commentary:** Silence trumps talk, for talk is always about the known, and the known is always about the past...only silence allows you to rest in the present. Action trumps talk for talk leads to the delusion of action; you imagine you are *doing* because you are talking about doing. It is not the thought that counts, and certainly not the talk about the thought. Practice rooted in silence is the way of the Sage. —R. Rami Shapiro

(\*Shimon, Rabban Gamaliel the Elder's son was the head of the *Sanhedrin* at the time of the destruction of the Temple around 70 CE.)

## Mishneh Avot

## Chapter 2: Mishnah 1

וְהִסְתַּפֵּל בְּשִׁלְשָׁה דְבָרִים וְאִי אֶתָּה בָּא לְיָדֶי עֲבֵרָה, דַּע מָה לְמַעַלָּה מִמֶּךָ, עַיִן רוֹאָה וְאָזֶן שׁוֹמְעֶת, וְכָל מַעֲשֵׂיךָ בְּסֵפֶר נִכְתָּבִין:

**Said Rabbi (Judah haNasi, compiler of the Mishnah, died 217 CE): Apply your mind to three things and you will not come into the clutches of sin.**

**1. Know (Da) what is (Mah) above you (l'Ma'ala Mimcha).**

Alt: **Know (Da) that what is (Mah) above you (l'Ma'ala) is from you, (Mimcha)**  
i.e. from your own mind, or mental construction. (Baal Shem Tov).

**2. There is an eye that sees, and an ear that hears;**

**3. And all your deeds are written in a Book of Record.**

**Commentary 1:** "Sin" (averah), or trespasses, are rooted in selfishness, and selfishness is the result of getting lost in "Small Mind," which the Sages termed: *Mochin d'Katnut*. Because we live in time and space, small mind is certainly necessary to carry out the tasks of living. However, when we lose touch with Spacious Mind, called *Mochin d'Gadlut*, we create all manner of problems for ourselves and others. The purpose of

meditation and prayer in Judaism is to realign with Mochin d' Gadlut, Spacious Mind, the dimension of our being that is pure awareness, most harmonious with the divine. —TF

**Commentary 2:** To cultivate Mochin d'Gadlut, practice seeing not only to the needs of self but to the needs of others, hearing not only the clamor of self, but the anguish of others; and remember that selfish acts will haunt you for all your life. —RS

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