

Throughout human history, man has had a tendency to make mistakes. Whether that is yelling at a sibling who is annoying you, to bragging about winning a game of bowling. These actions are accidental impulses that while may be considered a type of “evil”, they are not out of pure malice and hatred for humankind. However, when a person commits an act that hurts another with the intention to harm them, that makes a person “put out of this world”, otherwise known as becoming uncivilized, losing moral and ethical tendencies. This point is reinforced by Pirket Avot verse 2:11 “an evil eye, the evil inclination, and hatred for humankind put a person out of the world”, which showcases that purposely being evil makes you an uncivilized human.

So what makes an uncivilized human? In my eyes, it is when a person starts to lose their ethics and morality. In our society, we have an abundance of laws that help protect human lives, such as making it a crime to murder, steal from others, etc. which help reinforce ethics and morality. There are many people also helping to fight for human rights, such as civil rights activists. All of these things combined are a part of the civilized world. Humans deserve the right to live and prosper, without having to worry about other people intentionally trying to harm them. Being uncivilized however, is the opposite of following these laws and fighting for human rights.. it’s purposely taking away from them. When you have an idea in your head that specifically states “I want to harm this person in some way”, that is where the line is drawn between accidental human tendencies and pure malice. Going into human tendencies, humans make mistakes all the time, it is a part of human nature. If you argue impulsively with your sister for example, and are trying to prove a point, while this may be considered a type of evil, you sometimes do it without thinking, and you do not necessarily want to harm your sister. It is human error to act on your impulses. All in all, that is what I believe to be “uncivilized”.

So how does this all connect to the Pirket Avot verse? At the beginning of the verse, it discusses “the evil eye, the evil inclination”, which I interpret as the will to hurt one another. Having an “evil eye” is kind of like having a filter on your eye: your eye makes you act out all the good but the filter makes you act out your evil intentions. The next part of the verse “a hatred for humankind” is an extension of the first half of the verse, which showcases that the actions that you commit can be forgiven as long as your intentions are not to hurt one another. The second half of the verse “put a person out of this world” is the more obscure but arguably important part. When you have this “evil inclination” that was talked about previously, I interpret it as becoming an uncivilized human who lacks morals and ethics. I believe that once you have hatred for another person and mean to harm them, you are not a part of the civilized world anymore. To sum this verse up, if you have the will to harm somebody, you lack ethics and morals which causes you to become uncivilized.

As a Jew, this verse has informed me to always be a good person, and not intentionally cause harm to another. While I will make mistakes, I will never, ever commit an action that will harm someone intentionally. I hope other people will take this verse to heart as well, because it is very important to be a good person to others, so we can live as one big community.