

Selflessness and balance in Pirkei Avot

In today's world, where technology is rapidly advancing and information is constantly changing, the ability to learn and adapt is more important than ever. Pirkei Avot 1:14 emphasizes the value of knowledge and taking personal responsibility for one's own learning and growth. With access to vast amounts of information and knowledge at our fingertips, it is crucial for individuals to take an active role in their education and personal development. To dive deeper into this, the passage also highlights the importance of contributing to society for the greater good and not only for oneself. In our world where global issues such as climate change, inequality, and poverty are pressing concerns, individuals who take responsibility for their own growth and contribute to society can have a significant impact just by putting in the effort. Thus, Pirkei Avot's message of personal responsibility and the importance of contributing to society is just as relevant today as it was in ancient times.

Pirkei Avot's teachings state, "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? But if I am only for myself, who am I? If not now, when?" (Pirkei Avot 1:14). This statement contains a powerful message about the important balance in our lives as who one chooses to help versus when one chooses oneself gives much insight into someone's character. The first part of the quote, "If I am not for myself, who will be for me?" reminds us that one is still responsible for their own well-being and must take care of ourselves in order to succeed in life. This includes our physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. One cannot rely on others to take care of us, and if one neglects themselves, they will not be able to fulfill our potential and contribute to the world around us. The second part of the quote, "But if I am only for myself, who am I?" highlights the danger of selfishness and individualism. While it's important to take care of ourselves, one must also consider the needs and well-being of others. Humans are very social and if one only focuses

on ourselves and isolates themselves it can pull them away from their very nature. When one prioritizes their own needs at the expense of others, one risks becoming much worse off than if striving for connection and friendship. Finally, the phrase "If not now, when?" urges one to take action and make a difference in the world around us. One cannot wait for the "perfect" time to act or for someone else to take the lead. Each person has the power and responsibility to make a positive impact on the world, and the time to start is now.

To conclude, this quote from Pirkei Avot is a reminder of the important balance of responsibility and action in our lives. One must take care of themselves while also considering the needs of others, and one must not wait for someone else to make a difference in the world. People must use this teaching in our daily lives to gain empathy and humility. One can use this teaching to approach life spiritually and grow as a person by thinking about the world around them and not only for oneself. As one strives to live life with purpose they cannot live selfishly as these texts teach people to be better people and much can be learned from the scholars about one's very life.