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How Much are You Worth?, 1962.

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## HOW MUCH ARE YOU WORTH?

Dr. Abba Hillel Silver  
Sunday Morning, December 2, 1962

It is not difficult to answer the question: "How much are you worth?" if you are thinking only of material possessions. A man can, without great difficulty, add up how much he has in the bank, in stocks and bonds, in real estate and in other assets, and he will soon know how much he is worth in dollars and cents.

But is that all there is to it? Is a man's worth determined exclusively by what he has in his purse? Suppose he had less, would his worth be correspondingly less? Suppose he had no material possessions to speak of in this world, would his worth be altogether negligible?

What really does constitute a man's true worth? Surely not what he has laid away in his coffers! It would never occur to anyone to ask how much money was Abraham Lincoln worth or Beethoven, or the poet Shelley, or Professor Einstein. Their possessions had nothing to do with their real worth, their service to mankind.

There are, of course, people who think -- as some one put it -- "that they are worth a lot of money just because they have it." Or, as the renowned Jewish humorist Shalom Aleichem, expressed it: "If you have money, you're wise, you're handsome, and you can sing." But that is the private wishful self-estimate of certain people. Few men go along with it. When such people lose their money, as frequently happens in our uncertain world, they, themselves, must come to look upon themselves as worthless. The prop of their self-evaluation has been knocked from under them. Their own standards then condemn and humiliate them.

People who hold to such standards of human worth commit two gross follies. They employ, as it were, a magic mirror which dilates and enlarges them, and which diminishes and reduces all other people. Their false lenses distort the true human dimensions. And what is worse, they frequently fail to see other people altogether. They see only themselves. The eminent Hasidic leader, Nahman of Bratzlav, used to tell his disciples: "A small coin held before your eye will hide the biggest mountain." "Through the clear glass of a window," another Hasidic leader was fond of saying, "one can see men, women and children moving about in the street, but through a glass which has been backed with a coating of silver -- i.e. through a looking glass -- one sees only himself."

But a man who sees only himself is self-imprisoned. He may be worth a lot of money, but he has paid too high a price for it. As a human being he has made the mistake of settling for much less than he could have had. There are so many wonderful worlds which were open to him. He closed the doors upon all of them and, in his acquisitive eagerness and concentration, he sequestered himself in only one, and spent all his days and all the energies of his life in that one world. How much is such a man really worth when you count his gains against his losses?

Is such a man rich in self-respect? in friends? in the esteem of men? in the love of wife and children? Has he filled his mind with the treasures of learning? Has he filled his heart with the wealth of human affection? Has he filled his soul with the glow and glory of great dreams and ideals?

Failing in these, what really is his true worth? What other things

besides money has he to show for a life of struggle, of pushing and shoving, of clawing and grasping and hoarding? And when his day draws to a close, and the shadows begin to lengthen, what grateful memories will be his, what satisfactions will he be able to hug to his bosom, what pride will fill his heart?

What, then, is a man's real worth? The Bible here gives us a clue, as it does to so many other major human problems. The Bible does not disparage wealth as such, or the acquisition of wealth. It does not condemn them as base or sinful. It does not make a virtue of poverty. Poverty, like suffering, is not desirable for its own sake, although both can be used in the development of character. It is not necessary to be poor in order to be a saint. It is not necessary to reduce life to rude and threadbare simplicities in order to acquire either wisdom or happiness or salvation. Wealth, to be sure, has its pitfalls, but so has poverty. Poverty can coarsen a man, as readily as riches. The poor man is not always free. The rich man is not always a slave. The real test of character is how a man reacts to wealth and poverty.

But there are greater riches in store for man, the Bible maintains, than gold and silver. There are, for example, children. Abraham, whom God had chosen to be the founder of our faith, had a vision in which the Lord said unto him: "Fear not, I am your shield, and your reward shall be exceeding great." To which Abraham promptly replied: "What wealth can you give me seeing that I am childless?" ( )  
Nothing that the Lord could give him of silver or gold, of flocks and herds would be of any account to him, seeing that he was denied an offspring. When a son was born to him in his old age, the Bible states: "And Abraham

was old, well advanced in years and God blessed Abraham in all things  
( )." "In all things," said the  
Rabbis, "that means a son. The numerical value of the letters in  
is 52, the same as the letters in -- 'a son,' which is also 52."

Children are an incomparable treasure -- the most precious of all the gifts of life. ( ) -- "Children," sang the Psalmist, are the supreme inheritance from God. ( ) -- The fruit of the womb is the supreme gift."

But there are people who pay less attention to their children than they do to their stocks and bonds, so that their children, when they grow up, do not ever call them blessed. Such people delegate the rearing of their children to the nurse, the maid, the housekeeper, the school, the camp, the street. They believe that they discharge their full duty as parents when they give their children a cursory, over-all supervision and when they pay the bills. On this subject, the Rabbis made a profound observation: "It is not the man who begets the child who is his true father, but he who raises him. (

From time to time I hear parents complain: "We don't understand what's wrong with children today. We raised our children and brought them up. We gave them everything, but now they are strangers to us." Many who do not thus openly complain, chew the bitter curd of disappointment in silence. I sometimes wonder what they mean when they say, "We gave our children everything." Do they also mean, "We gave ourselves to them -- our boundless and understanding love. We were always there when they needed us. We, and no surrogate, were the sure and loving focus of their lives. We and they grew through the years into a natural oneness. We

were a family always, seven days a week, and we built a home for them -- not merely the hollow shell of a house. We gave them a stimulating environment, a warm climate, a tradition and proud memories."

There are, of course, instances where parents do their very best for their children and give them a full measure of love, care and devotion, and the results are, nevertheless, disappointing. But, by and large, the tree that is planted by a stream of water, and carefully and lovingly tended, will bring forth its fruit in its season and its leaf will not wither.

Children, then, who do not disappoint -- ( )  
are to be placed at the very top of the list when you ask the question, "How much is this man worth?"

Included in a man's assets also are his friends. "Who finds a faithful friend," said Ben Sira, "Finds a treasure." A friendless man is a poor man, regardless how bulging are his money bags, how many servitors he has, and how many people do his bidding. His life is an empty wilderness. A true friend brings to one not only the precious metal of fellowship, but also of stimulation and inspiration. "Iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend."

There are people who believe that they have friends when they really have only flatterers and hangers-on, people who fawn on them in their prosperity and will desert them in their adversity -- fair-weather friends. To have friends, one must cultivate a capacity for friendship, one must be ready to give more than one receives.

How much is a man worth whose name is a hissing and a by-word among

The Bible says that a good name is worth more than the most precious oil. "A good name is more to be desired than great riches ( )." Mind you, a good name is not necessarily a famous name, a headline name, a society name. It is a name which is sweet upon the lips of men, because the bearer of that name is respected and admired because of the integrity of his life, the steadfastness of his character, the goodness of his heart, because he can always be relied upon. Many a humble man, who is possessed of the most modest means, may enjoy a good name in the world in which he moves, be it a large or a small world. The affection and respect in which such a man is held is worth more to him than all the wealth of the Indies. It is, as Shakespeare puts it, "The immediate jewel of his soul." When a man has failed to earn a good name, or has, by the conduct of his life, forfeited it -- he is thoroughly impoverished. Job called all worthless and ignoble people -- "the nameless ones."

To enjoy a good name, to be well thought of by one's fellow-men, is worth very much to a person, but to enjoy self-esteem and a just pride in one's self is worth even more. To be sure, "God dwells with him that is of a humble spirit." Of the greatest of men, Moses, the Bible says that he was humble above all men that were upon the face of the earth ( ). But, while the Bible time and again denounces all swaggering haughtiness and all strutting arrogance and praises meekness and modesty, it nowhere deprecates self-respect, self-esteem, and the noble pride which a man may justifiably take in the good life which he fashioned for himself.

The approbation of other men is greatly to be desired, but the approbation of self is even more so. What pride, then, is yours? Of how many things in your life are you proud? I do not mean arrogantly proud, but humbly and gratefully proud? Can you point to the hard struggles of your youth and how you won through, the obstacles and drawbacks which you overcame, the trials which did not faze you, the temptations to which you did not succumb -- the firmness with which you adhered to what you believed to be the right, the sacrifices which you made for children, family, friends or country? -- then you have the sweetest fruits of which a man may eat in this world, and which no amount of money can buy. This is what a man is worth to himself! That is his garland of roses, his chaplet of grace.

The man of learning, the wise man, our tradition accounted, is a very rich man. ( )

"Wisdom is better than rubies, and all things desirable are not to be compared to her." The man of learning is not merely the man who has acquired learning at one time, in school or college, and has since put it all in deep-freeze, but the man who is learning all the time, and not only from books, but from his fellow-men ( ) -- and from all the experiences of his life. Such a man, whose mind is open, eager, receptive, selective, well stocked and constantly replenished, is indeed a man of great wealth, which he can never lose.

Our sages tell a simple story to illustrate this last point. There was a ship at sea, and on it were merchants who carried with them rich merchandise to a distant port. They were very proud of their possessions. On board was also a man who seemingly carried no wares at all. The

merchants ridiculed him for his poverty. One day pirates boarded the ship and stripped the merchants of all their possessions. When the ship finally reached port, the merchants disembarked empty-handed, wailing and bemoaning their fate. The one man whom they had ridiculed disembarked as quiet and composed as ever. He was a famous scholar on his way to an academy in the city, which had invited him to become its head. He had lost nothing to the pirates. His wealth was all in his head. . . .

How much is a man worth? All that he has given away, all that he has shared. And remember, one can give away many things besides money -- things which are perhaps more valuable to the recipient than money -- guidance, encouragement, comfort, affection, loyalty.

How much is a man worth? As much as he is needed by others. A man who is greatly needed is a very rich man. The many who turn to him for counsel, for judgment, for approval, for reassurance, constitute his intangible wealth. Indeed, he has much to give, else he would not be sought after. Some men are needed to be "the mouth of such as cannot speak," the eyes for such as grope in blind darkness, and feet and hands for the helpless. In other people's need of him are revealed the measure of a man's importance, the value and the wealth of his life.

Perhaps, all that we have said may best be summed up in a rephrasing of our question, in putting it this way: "How much are you worth to God?" When the main account is made up before Him who knows all things, both secret and revealed -- how much will you be worth? God is sure to take into account also our motives, our efforts, our aspirations, what we tried to do but failed to achieve, the high hopes which we entertained but which, in spite of all our struggles and dedication, were never fulfilled.

The poet Browning puts these thoughts and words in the mouth of

Rabbi Ben Ezra:

Not on the vulgar mass  
Called "work" must sentence pass,

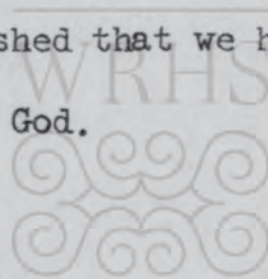
.....

But all, the world's coarse thumb  
And fingers failed to plumb

.....

All I could never be,  
All, men ignored in me,  
This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped.

How much, then, is this or that man worth? Perhaps it were best  
to leave the final answer to God, and in the meantime to try to live in  
such a way that we will not some day stand empty-handed before His  
judgment throne, abashed that we have somehow disappointed ourselves,  
our friends, and our God.



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HOW MUCH ARE YOU WORTH?

DR. ABBA HILLEL SILVER  
Sunday Morning - December 2, 1962

IT IS NOT DIFFICULT TO ANSWER THE QUESTION: "HOW MUCH ARE YOU WORTH?" IF YOU ARE THINKING ONLY OF MATERIAL POSSESSIONS. A MAN CAN, WITHOUT GREAT DIFFICULTY, ADD UP HOW MUCH HE HAS IN THE BANK, IN STOCKS AND BONDS, IN REAL ESTATE AND IN OTHER ASSETS, AND HE WILL SOON KNOW HOW MUCH HE IS WORTH *in dollars and cents*.

BUT IS THAT ALL THERE IS TO IT? ~~AND~~ IS A MAN'S WORTH DETERMINED EXCLUSIVELY BY WHAT HE HAS IN HIS PURSE? SUPPOSE HE HAD LESS, WOULD HIS WORTH BE CORRESPONDINGLY LESS? SUPPOSE HE HAD NO MATERIAL POSSESSIONS TO SPEAK OF IN THIS WORLD, WOULD HIS WORTH BE ALTOGETHER NEGLIGIBLE?

WHAT REALLY <sup>does</sup> CONSTITUTE A MAN'S TRUE WORTH? SURELY NOT WHAT HE HAS LAID AWAY IN HIS COFFERS! IT WOULD NEVER OCCUR TO ANYONE TO ASK HOW MUCH MONEY WAS ABRAHAM LINCOLN WORTH OR BEETHOVEN, OR THE POET SHELLEY, OR PROFESSOR EINSTEIN. THEIR POSSESSIONS HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH THEIR REAL WORTH, THEIR SERVICE TO MANKIND.

THERE ARE, OF COURSE, PEOPLE WHO THINK -- AS SOME ONE PUT IT -- "THAT THEY ARE WORTH A LOT OF MONEY JUST BECAUSE THEY HAVE IT." OR, AS THE RENOWNED JEWISH HUMORIST SHALOM ALEICHEM, EXPRESSED IT: "IF YOU HAVE MONEY, YOU'RE WISE,

YOU'RE HANDSOME AND YOU CAN SING". BUT THAT IS THE PRIVATE WISHFUL SELF-ESTIMATE OF CERTAIN PEOPLE. FEW MEN GO ALONG WITH IT. WHEN SUCH PEOPLE LOSE THEIR MONEY, AS FREQUENTLY HAPPENS IN OUR UNCERTAIN WORLD, THEY, THEMSELVES, MUST COME TO LOOK UPON THEMSELVES AS WORTHLESS. THE PROP OF THEIR SELF-EVALUATION HAS BEEN KNOCKED FROM UNDER THEM. THEIR OWN STANDARDS THEN CONDEMN AND HUMILIATE THEM.

PEOPLE WHO HOLD TO SUCH STANDARDS OF HUMAN WORTH COMMIT TWO GROSS FOLLIES. THEY EMPLOY <sup>as it were</sup> A MAGIC MIRROR WHICH DILATES AND ENLARGES THEM, AND WHICH DIMINISHES AND REDUCES ALL OTHER PEOPLE. THEIR FALSE LENSES DISTORT THE TRUE HUMAN DIMENSIONS. AND WHAT IS WORSE, THEY FREQUENTLY FAIL TO SEE OTHER PEOPLE ALTOGETHER. THEY SEE ONLY THEMSELVES. THE EMINENT HASIDIC LEADER, NAHMAN OF BRATZLAV, USED TO TELL HIS DISCIPLES: "A SMALL COIN HELD BEFORE YOUR EYE WILL HIDE THE BIGGEST MOUNTAIN." THROUGH THE CLEAR GLASS OF A WINDOW", ANOTHER HASIDIC LEADER WAS FOND OF SAYING, "ONE CAN SEE MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN MOVING ABOUT IN THE STREET, BUT THROUGH A GLASS WHICH HAS BEEN BACKED WITH A COATING OF SILVER -- i. e., THROUGH A LOOKING GLASS -- ONE SEES ONLY HIMSELF."

BUT A MAN WHO SEES ONLY HIMSELF IS SELF-IMPRISONED. HE MAY BE WORTH A LOT OF MONEY, BUT HAS HAD PAID TOO HIGH A PRICE FOR IT. AS A HUMAN BEING HE HAS MADE THE MISTAKE OF SETTling FOR MUCH LESS THAN HE COULD HAVE HAD. THERE ARE SO MANY WONDERFUL WORLDS WHICH WERE OPEN TO HIM. HE CLOSED THE DOORS UPON ALL OF THEM AND, IN HIS ACQUISITIVE EAGERNESS AND CONCENTRATION, HE SEQUESTERED HIMSELF IN ONLY ONE, AND SPENT ALL HIS DAYS AND ALL THE ENERGIES OF HIS LIFE IN THAT ONE WORLD. HOW MUCH IS SUCH A MAN REALLY WORTH WHEN YOU <sup>count</sup> ~~MEASURE~~ HIS GAINS AGAINST HIS LOSSES?

IS SUCH A MAN RICH IN SELF-RESPECT? IN FRIENDS? IN THE ESTEEM OF MEN? IN THE LOVE OF WIFE AND CHILDREN? HAS HE FILLED HIS MIND WITH THE TREASURES OF LEARNING? HAS HE FILLED HIS HEART WITH THE WEALTH OF HUMAN AFFECTION? ~~HAD~~ HE FILLED HIS SOUL WITH THE GLOW AND GLORY OF GREAT DREAMS AND IDEALS?

FAILING IN THESE, WHAT REALLY IS HIS TRUE WORTH? WHAT OTHER THINGS BESIDES MONEY HAS HE TO SHOW FOR A LIFE OF STRUGGLE, OF PUSHING AND SHOVING, OF CLAWING AND GRASPING AND HOARDING? AND WHEN HIS DAY DRAWS TO A CLOSE, AND THE

SHADOWS BEGIN TO LENGTHEN, WHAT GRATEFUL MEMORIES WILL BE HIS, WHAT SATISFACTIONS WILL HE BE ABLE TO HUG TO HIS BOSOM, WHAT PRIDE WILL FILL HIS HEART?

WHAT, THEN, IS A MAN'S REAL WORTH? THE BIBLE HERE GIVES US A CLUE, AS IT DOES TO <sup>20</sup>~~20~~ MANY OTHER MAJOR HUMAN PROBLEMS. THE BIBLE DOES NOT DISPARAGE WEALTH AS SUCH, OR THE ACQUISITION OF WEALTH. IT DOES NOT CONDEMN THEM AS BASE OR SINFUL. IT DOES NOT MAKE A VIRTUE OF POVERTY. POVERTY, LIKE SUFFERING, IS NOT DESIRABLE FOR ITS OWN SAKE, ALTHOUGH BOTH CAN BE USED IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHARACTER. IT IS NOT NECESSARY TO BE POOR IN ORDER TO BE A SAINT. IT IS NOT NECESSARY TO REDUCE LIFE TO RUDE AND THREADBARE SIMPLICITIES IN ORDER TO ACQUIRE EITHER WISDOM OR HAPPINESS OR SALVATION. WEALTH, TO BE SURE, HAS ITS PITFALLS, BUT SO HAS POVERTY. POVERTY CAN COARSEN A MAN, AS READILY AS RICHES. THE POOR MAN IS NOT ALWAYS FREE. THE RICH MAN IS NOT ALWAYS A SLAVE. THE REAL TEST OF CHARACTER IS HOW A MAN REACTS TO WEALTH AND POVERTY.

BUT THERE ARE GREATER RICHES IN STORE FOR MAN, THE BIBLE MAINTAINS, THAN GOLD AND SILVER. THERE ARE, FOR EXAMPLE, CHILDREN. ABRAHAM, WHOM GOD HAD CHOSEN TO BE THE FOUNDER OF OUR FAITH, HAD A VISION IN WHICH THE LORD SAID UNTO HIM: "FEAR NOT, I AM YOUR SHIELD, AND YOUR REWARD SHALL BE EXCEEDING GREAT". TO WHICH ABRAHAM PROMPTLY REPLIED: "WHAT WEALTH CAN YOU GIVE ME SEEING THAT I AM CHILDLESS?" ( <sup>נח אבן</sup> )

<sup>והאלהים יתן לו</sup> NOTHING THAT THE LORD COULD GIVE HIM OF SILVER OR GOLD, OF FLOCKS AND HERDS WOULD BE OF ANY

ACCOUNT TO HIM, SEEING THAT HE WAS DENIED AN OFFSPRING.

WHEN A SON WAS BORN TO HIM IN HIS OLD AGE, THE BIBLE STATES:

"AND ABRAHAM WAS OLD, WELL ADVANCED IN YEARS AND GOD

BLESSED ABRAHAM IN ALL THINGS ( *וְאֵל קִרַּק אֱבְרָהִם וְהָאֵל בֵּרַךְ* )

"IN ALL THINGS", SAID THE RABBIS, THAT MEANS A SON. THE

NUMERICAL VALUE OF THE LETTERS IN *בֵּרַךְ* IS 52,

THE SAME AS THE LETTERS IN *בֵּן* = "a son", WHICH IS ALSO 52.

CHILDREN ARE AN INCOMPARABLE TREASURE -- THE MOST PRECIOUS OF ALL THE GIFTS OF LIFE ( *וְהַיְלָד הַיָּחִיד כֶּסֶף חַיִּים* ) --

"CHILDREN, SANG THE PSALMIST, ARE THE SUPREME INHERITANCE FROM GOD. ( *פְּרִי הַבֶּטֶן הַיָּחִיד* ) -- "THE FRUIT OF THE WOMB IS THE SUPREME GIFT."

BUT THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO PAY LESS ATTENTION TO THEIR CHILDREN THAN THEY DO TO THEIR STOCKS AND BONDS, SO THAT THEIR CHILDREN, WHEN THEY GROW UP, DO NOT EVER CALL THEM BLESSED. *Such people*  
~~THEY~~ DELEGATE THE REARING OF THEIR CHILDREN TO THE NURSE, THE MAID, THE HOUSEKEEPER, THE SCHOOL, THE CAMP, THE STREET. THEY BELIEVE THAT THEY DISCHARGE THEIR FULL DUTY AS PARENTS WHEN THEY GIVE THEIR CHILDREN A CURSORY, OVER-ALL SUPERVISION, AND WHEN THEY PAY THE BILLS. ON THIS SUBJECT, THE RABBIS MADE A PROFOUND OBSERATION: "IT IS NOT THE MAN WHO BEGETS THE CHILD WHO IS HIS TRUE FATHER, BUT HE WHO RAISES HIM. ( *הַמְּחַיֶּה* )

*וְהַמְּחַיֶּה הוּא הַאֲבִי.*

FROM TIME TO TIME I HEAR PARENTS COMPLAIN: "WE DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT'S WRONG WITH CHILDREN TODAY. WE RAISED OUR CHILDREN AND BROUGHT THEM UP. WE GAVE THEM EVERYTHING, BUT NOW THEY ARE STRANGERS TO US." MANY WHO DO NOT THUS OPENLY COMPLAIN, CHEW THE BITTER CURD OF DISAPPOINTMENT IN SILENCE. I SOMETIMES WONDER WHAT THEY MEAN WHEN THEY SAY: "WE GAVE OUR CHILDREN EVERYTHING"? DO THEY ALSO MEAN "WE GAVE OURSELVES TO THEM, —OUR BOUNDLESS AND UNDERSTANDING LOVE. WE WERE ALWAYS THERE WHEN THEY NEEDED US. WE, AND NO SURROGATE WERE THE SURE AND LOVING FOCUS OF THEIR LIVES. WE AND THEY GREW THROUGH THE YEARS INTO A NATURAL ONENESS. WE WERE A FAMILY ALWAYS, SEVEN DAYS A WEEK, AND WE BUILT A HOME FOR THEM -- NOT MERELY THE HOLLOW SHELL OF A HOUSE. WE GAVE THEM A STIMULATING ENVIRONMENT, A WARM CLIMATE, A TRADITION AND PROUD MEMORIES." <sup>IF</sup> THERE ARE, OF COURSE, INSTANCES WHERE PARENTS DO THEIR VERY BEST FOR THEIR CHILDREN AND GIVE THEM A FULL MEASURE OF LOVE, CARE AND DEVOTION, AND THE RESULTS ARE, NEVERTHELESS, DISAPPOINTING. BUT, BY AND LARGE, THE TREE THAT IS PLANTED BY A STREAM OF WATER, AND CAREFULLY AND LOVINGLY TENDED, WILL BRING FORTH ITS FRUIT IN ITS SEASON AND ITS LEAF WILL NOT WITHER.

CHILDREN, THEN, WHO DO NOT DISAPPOINT -- ( /כך וכל ענין )  
ARE TO BE PLACED AT THE VERY TOP OF THE LIST WHEN YOU ASK  
THE QUESTION: "HOW MUCH IS THIS MAN WORTH?"

INCLUDED IN A MAN'S ASSETS ALSO ARE HIS FRIENDS. "WHO  
FINDS A FAITHFUL FRIEND," SAID BEN SIRA, "FINDS A TREASURE."  
A FRIENDLESS MAN IS A POOR MAN, REGARDLESS HOW BULGING ARE  
HIS MONEY BAGS, HOW MANY SERVITORS HE HAS, AND HOW MANY  
PEOPLE DO HIS BIDDING. HIS LIFE IS AN EMPTY WILDERNESS. A  
TRUE FRIEND BRINGS <sup>to</sup> ONE NOT ONLY THE PRECIOUS METAL OF FELLOW-  
SHIP, BUT ALSO OF STIMULATION AND INSPIRATION. "IRON SHARPENS  
IRON, SO A MAN SHARPENS THE COUNTENANCE OF HIS FRIEND."

THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO BELIEVE THAT THEY HAVE FRIENDS  
WHEN THEY REALLY HAVE ONLY FLATTERERS AND HANGERS-ON,  
PEOPLE WHO FAWN ON THEM IN THEIR PROSPERITY AND WILL DESERT  
THEM IN THEIR ADVERSITY -- FAIR-WEATHER FRIENDS. TO HAVE  
FRIENDS, ONE MUST CULTIVATE A CAPACITY FOR FRIENDSHIP,  
ONE MUST BE READY TO GIVE MORE THAN ONE RECEIVES.

HOW MUCH IS A MAN WORTH WHOSE NAME IS A HISSING AND A  
BY-WORD AMONG MEN, AND HOW MUCH IS HE WORTH WHO HAS A GOOD  
NAME AMONG HIS FELLOW-MEN?

THE BIBLE SAYS THAT A GOOD NAME IS WORTH MORE THAN THE  
MOST PRECIOUS OIL. "A GOOD NAME IS MORE TO BE <sup>desired</sup> ~~DESERVED~~ THAN  
GREAT RICHES" ( <sup>אין ענין</sup> ). MIND YOU, A GOOD

PUTS IT, "THE IMMEDIATE  
FAILED TO EARN A GOOD  
LIFE, FORFEITED IT -- HE

\_\_\_\_\_

(<sup>אנשים</sup> ~~נא~~ לך שכל פזרים לך מן המזל 157 א לך לך לך).

THE APPROBATION OF OTHER MEN IS GREATLY TO BE DESIRED, BUT THE APPROBATION OF SELF IS EVEN MORE SO. WHAT PRIDE, THEN, IS YOURS? OF HOW MANY THINGS IN YOUR LIFE ARE YOU PROUD? I DO NOT MEAN ARROGANTLY PROUD, BUT HUMBLY AND GRATEFULLY PROUD? CAN YOU POINT TO THE HARD STRUGGLES OF YOUR YOUTH AND HOW YOU WON THROUGH, THE OBSTACLES AND DRAWBACKS WHICH YOU OVER-CAME, THE TRIALS WHICH DID NOT FAZE YOU, THE TEMPTATIONS TO WHICH YOU DID NOT SUCCUMB -- THE FIRMNESS WITH WHICH YOU ADHERED TO WHAT YOU BELIEVED TO BE THE RIGHT, THE SACRIFICES WHICH YOU MADE FOR CHILDREN, FAMILY, FRIENDS OR COUNTRY ? -- THEN YOU HAVE THE SWEETEST  
A  
FRUITS OF WHICH MAN MAY EAT IN THIS WORLD, AND WHICH NO AMOUNT OF MONEY CAN BUY. THIS IS WHAT A MAN IS WORTH TO HIMSELF! THAT IS HIS GARLAND OF ROSES, HIS CHAPLET OF GRACE.

THE MAN OF LEARNING, THE WISE MAN, OUR TRADITION AC-  
COUNTED, IS A VERY RICH MAN. ( חכמה משובח, חכמה )  
חכמה היא עשיר, "WISDOM IS BETTER THAN RUBIES,  
AND ALL THINGS DESIRABLE ARE NOT TO BE COMPARED TO HER."  
THE MAN OF LEARNING IS NOT MERELY THE MAN WHO HAS ACQUIRED

LEARNING AT ONE TIME, IN SCHOOL OR COLLEGE, AND HAS SINCE PUT IT ALL IN DEEP-FREEZE, BUT THE MAN WHO IS LEARNING ALL THE TIME, AND NOT ONLY FROM BOOKS, BUT FROM HIS FELLOW-MEN ( *23/6 LN 31/6* ) -- AND FROM ALL THE EXPERIENCES OF HIS LIFE. SUCH A MAN, WHOSE MIND IS OPEN, EAGER, RECEPTIVE, SELECTIVE, WELL-STOCKED AND CONSTANTLY REPLENISHED, IS INDEED A MAN OF GREAT WEALTH, WHICH HE CAN NEVER LOSE.

OUR SAGES TELL A SIMPLE STORY TO ILLUSTRATE THIS <sup>*Last*</sup> POINT. THERE WAS A SHIP AT SEA, AND ON IT WERE MERCHANTS WHO CARRIED WITH THEM RICH MERCHANDISE TO A DISTANT PORT. THEY WERE VERY PROUD OF ~~XXXXXX~~ THEIR POSSESSIONS. ON BOARD WAS ALSO A MAN WHO SEEMINGLY ~~HAD~~ CARRIED NO WARES AT ALL. THE MERCHANTS RIDICULED HIM FOR HIS POVERTY. ONE DAY PIRATES BOARDED THE SHIP AND STRIPPED THE MERCHANTS OF ALL THEIR POSSESSIONS. WHEN THE SHIP FINALLY REACHED PORT, THE MERCHANTS DISEMBARKED EMPTY-HANDED, WAILING AND BE-MOANING THEIR FATE. THE ONE MAN WHOM THEY HAD RIDICULED DISEMBARKED AS QUIET AND COMPOSED AS EVER. HE WAS A FAMOUS SCHOLAR ON HIS WAY TO AN ACADEMY IN THE CITY ~~TO~~ *which* ~~WHICH HE~~ <sup>*him*</sup> HAD ~~BEEN~~ INVITED TO BECOME ITS HEAD. HE HAD LOST NOTHING TO THE PIRATES. HIS WEALTH WAS ALL IN HIS HEAD. . . .

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HOW MUCH IS A MAN WORTH? ALL THAT HE HAS GIVEN AWAY, ALL THAT HE HAS SHARED. AND REMEMBER, ONE CAN GIVE AWAY

MANY THINGS BESIDES MONEY -- THINGS WHICH ARE PERHAPS MORE  
VALUEABLE TO THE RECIPIENT THAN MONEY -- GUIDANCE,  
ENCOURAGEMENT, COMFORT, AFFECTION, LOYALTY.

HOW MUCH IS A MAN WORTH? AS MUCH AS HE IS NEEDED BY  
OTHERS. A MAN WHO IS GREATLY NEEDED IS A VERY RICH MAN.  
THE MANY WHO TURN TO HIM FOR COUNSEL, FOR JUDGMENT, FOR  
APPROVAL, FOR REASSURANCE, CONSTITUTE HIS INTANGIBLE WEALTH.  
INDEED, HE HAS MUCH TO GIVE, ELSE HE WOULD NOT BE SOUGHT AFTER.  
SOME MEN ARE NEEDED TO BE "THE MOUTH OF SUCH AS CANNOT  
SPEAK", THE EYES FOR SUCH AS GROPE IN BLIND DARKNESS, AND  
FEET <sup>and hands</sup> FOR THE HELPLESS. IN OTHER PEOPLE'S NEED OF HIM ARE  
REVEALED THE MEASURE OF A MAN'S IMPORTANCE, THE VALUE AND  
THE WEALTH OF HIS LIFE.

PERHAPS, ALL THAT WE HAVE SAID MAY BEST BE SUMMED UP  
IN A RE-PHRASING OF OUR QUESTION, ~~AND~~ IN PUTTING IT THIS WAY:  
"HOW MUCH ARE YOU WORTH TO GOD?" WHEN THE MAIN ACCOUNT IS  
MADE <sup>up</sup> BEFORE HIM WHO KNOWS ALL THINGS, BOTH SECRET AND  
REVEALED -- HOW MUCH WILL YOU BE WORTH? GOD IS SURE TO TAKE  
INTO ACCOUNT <sup>also</sup> ~~ALL OF US EVEN~~ OUR MOTIVES, OUR EFFORTS, OUR  
ASPIRATIONS, WHAT WE TRIED TO DO BUT FAILED TO ACHIEVE, THE  
HIGH HOPES WHICH WE ENTERTAINED BUT WHICH, IN SPITE OF ALL  
OUR STRUGGLE <sup>and</sup> DEDICATION, WERE NEVER FULFILLED.

THE POET BROWNING PUTS THESE THOUGHTS AND WORDS IN  
THE MOUTH OF RABBI BEN EZRA:

" NOT ON THE VULGAR MASS

CALLED "WORK" MUST SENTENCE PASS,  
.....

BUT ALL, THE WORLD'S COARSE THUMB  
AND FINGERS FAILED TO PLUMB  
.....

ALL I COULD NEVER BE,

ALL, MEN IGNORED IN ME,

THIS, I WAS WORTH TO GOD, WHOSE WHEEL THE  
PITCHER SHAPED. "

HOW MUCH, THEN, IS THIS ~~MAN~~ OR THAT MAN WORTH?  
PERHAPS IT WERE BEST TO LEAVE THE FINAL ANSWER TO GOD,  
AND IN THE MEANTIME <sup>to</sup> TRY TO LIVE IN SUCH A WAY THAT WE WILL  
NOT SOME DAY STAND EMPTY-HANDED BEFORE HIS JUDGMENT  
THRONE, ABASHED THAT WE HAVE SOMEHOW DISAPPOINTED OUR-  
SELVES, OUR FRIENDS, AND OUR GOD.