**Iamblichus' LIFE OF**

**PYTHAGORAS\***

**by**

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 Iamblichus was a beloved student of Pythagoras.

 Pythagoras was born in about 570 B.C. on the island of Samos. The parents of Pythagoras came to Delphi for the purpose of merchandize. His Father inquired of the Delphic prophet concerning the event of his voyage to Syria. He was told that his voyage would be lucrative, but that his wife was now pregnant, and would bring forth a son surpassing in beauty and wisdom all that ever lived, and who would be of the greatest advantage to the human race in everything pertaining to the life of man.2

 His father took care to have his son nourished with various and the best disciplines, and by the best teachers. As a lad, the demeanor and aspect of Pythagoras was most venerable so that he was even reverenced and honored by elderly men. It was reasonably asserted by many, that he was the son of a God.3

 When the tyranny of Policrates first made its appearance, Pythagoras, at the age of eighteen, departed from Samos, first, to the great Anaximander and then to Thales at Miletus. Thales increased the reputation Pythagoras had already acquired by communicating to him such disciplines as he was able to impart. He exhorted him to sail into Egypt and associate with the Memphian and Diospolitan priests which Pythagoras did.4 He studied in Egypt for twenty-two years. By the time he left Egypt he was fifty-six years old. Pythagoras returned to Greece.5

 Pythagoras did not believe in killing animals. It is said that Pythagoras detained the Daunian bear which had most severely injured the inhabitants.6. He gently stoked the bear with his hand for a long time, fed it with maize and acorns, and compelled it by an oath no longer to touch any living thing, then he dismissed it. The bear immediately hid itself in the mountains and woods, and was never seen from that time again. In Sybaris he caught a deadly serpent and dismissed it.7

 Pythagoras is said to have given the boys the following advice: That they should neither revile any one, nor take vengeance on those that reviled. He enjoined them continence of speech, and perfect silence, exercising them for many years in the subjugation of the tongue, and in a strenuous and assiduous investigation and resumption of the most difficult theorems. He also, ordered them to abstain from wine, to be sparing in their food, to sleep little and to have an unstudied contempt of, and hostility to glory, wealth, and the like.8 He said there are things which it is better to learn at a late period and among these is the use of venery. It is necessary that a boy should be so educated, as not to seek after such a connection as this, within the twentieth year of his age;9108' But to the women he said they should bring to the altars without the assistance of servants such as cakes, honey-combs, and frankincense. But that they should not worship divinity with blood and dead bodies, nor offer many things at one time, if they never meant to sacrifice again. He exhorted them that they should love their husbands in a greater degree than those who were the sources of their existence.10

 He considered many things before making trial of those that came to him. If he perceived that anyone of them was unadapted, he expelled him as a stranger. In making aptitude of those that came to him he considered if they were able to refrain from speaking and if they could preserve what they had learnt and heard. He observed if they were modest. He considered how they were affected with respect to anger or desire, or whether they were contentious or ambitious, or how they were disposed with reference to friendship or strife.11

 When philosophy had received a great accession, he was admired by all Greece, and the best of those came to Samos on his account, in order that they might participate of his erudition. He taught the whole of physics, mathematics, geometry, ethical philosophy and logic. He delivered all various disciplines, and the most excellent sciences.12The citizens likewise employed him in all their embassies, and compelled him to unite with them in the administration of public affairs. However, Pythagoras decided that it was not the best thing for him to do. Instead, he decided that Italy was the place to be, where men, well disposed to learning were found in the greatest number. His arrival at Crotona he had many followers, amounting to the number of six hundred.13

 He said that what is luxury should by all possible means be excluded from every house and city, and that men should be accustomed from their birth to a temperate life. He said that it is requisite to be purified from all malediction, whether it be that which is lamentable, or that which exits hostility, and whether it be of a reviling, or insolent, or scurrilous nature.14 He said that women should not wear gold.15

 He believed their possessions should be shared in common. They lived together as a brotherhood and as a family. If one wanted to leave, he received all that he brought with him, and in addition he was given more.16

 Each of the Greeks who joined the Pythagorians, were ordered to use their native language.17

 He rejected all food that is flatulent. He exhorted his students to abstain from such things as are an impediment to prophesy, or to the chastity of the soul, or to the habit of temperance, or of virtue. He ordered them never to sacrifice animals to the Gods, nor by any means to injure animals. He exhorted them to abstain from anything animated, nor to drink wine, or beans on account of many sacred and physical causes, and also such causes as pertain to the soul. He ordered those politicians that were legislators to abstain from animals. For as they wished to act in the highest degrees justly, it is certainly necessary that they would not injure any kindred animal. Since, how could they persuade others to act justly, if they themselves were detected in indulging an insatiable avidity by partaking of animals that are allied to us?18 Pythagoras was likewise of opinion that music contributed greatly to health, if it was used in an appropriate manner. At another time, he used music in the place of medicine. There are certain melodies devised as remedies against the passion of the soul, and also against despondency and lamentation, which Pythagoras invented as things that afford the greatest assistance in these maladies. He employed other melodies against rage and anger and against every aberration of the soul.19

 (62) He invented harmonic science and harmonic ratios. He predicted earthquakes, rapid expulsions of pestilence, violent winds, etc.20

 He did not believe in woolen coverlets.21

 He was married and had a son and a daughter. Damo was the name of his daughter and Telauges was the name of his son.22

 The slave of Pythagoras, Zamolxis, being a Thracian, after he had heard the discourses of Pythagoras, having obtained his liberty, and returned to his city, gave laws to them and exhorted the citizens to fortitude, having persuaded them that the soul is immortal, that it cannot be destroyed, but that it remains after death, and that death is not to be feared, He was considered by them as the greatest of the Gods.23

 Some of the Pythagoreans were political characters, and adapted to govern. For they were the guardians of the laws, and ruled over certain Italian cities, unfolding to them and counseling them to adopt the most excellent measures, but abstaining from pubic revenue.24

 When Abaris, the Sythian came from the Hyperboreans, Pythagoras instructed him on the shortest way in his Treatise on Nature and in another on the Gods. Abaris was a priest of the Apollo, who is there worshipped; He is an elderly man, and most wise in sacred concerns. At the time he was returning from Greece to his own country in order that he might consecrate to the God in his temple among the Hyperboreans, the gold which he had collected. Passing through Italy and seeing Pythagoras, he especially assimilated him to the god of whom he was the priest. And believing that no man resembled him, but that he was truly Apollo, both from the venerable indications, which he saw about him, and from those which the priest had known before, he gave Pythagoras a dart which he took with him when he left the temple, as a thing that would be useful to him in the difficulties that would befall him in so long a journey. For he was carried by it, in passing through inaccessible places, such as rivers, lakes, marshes, mountains and the like and performed through it, lustrations and expelled pestilence and winds from the cities that requested him to liberate them from these evils. Pythagoras took the dart and did not ask the reason why it was given to him, but as if he was in reality a god himself. Taking Abaris aside, he showed him his golden thigh, a indication that he was not wholly deceived in the opinion he had formed of him. He said that he came into the region of mortality for the purpose of remedying and benefitting the condition of mankind and on that account he had assumed a human form, lest men being disturbed by the novelty of his transcendency should avoid the discipline which he possessed. He exhorted Abaris to unite with him in correcting the lives and manners of those with whom they might meet; but to share the gold which he had collected, in common with his associates, who were led by reason to confirm by their deeds the dogma, that the possessions of friends are common. Thus, Pythagoras unfolded to Abaris who remained with him, physiology and theology.

 Pythagoras learned from the Orphic writers that the essence of the gods is defined by number. Through the same numbers also he produced an admirable foreknowledge and worship of the Gods, both of which are especially most allied to numbers.26

 Pythagoras effected the dissolution of tyranny. He liberated Sicily from the most cruel and imperious power. Epimenides, a student of Pythagoras, when certain persons intended to destroy him, invoked the Furies, and the avenging Gods, and by so doing caused all those that attempted his life, to destroy each other.27

 While Pythagoras was out of the city, Cylon, a wealthy, violent, turbulent man had the greatest desire of being made a partaker of the Pythagoric life, but he was rejected. So vehement and immoderate was the ambition of Cylon. and those who arranged themselves on his side, that it extended itself to the very last of the Pythagoreans. The Cylonians became so hostile to the Pythagoreans, that they set fire to the house of Milo in which the Pythagoreans were seated They burnt all but two. The Pythagoreans ceased to pay any further attention to the affairs of government.28

 The Tyrant Dionysius could not obtain the friendship of anyone of the Pythagoreans. He sent therefore to the ten Pythagoreans a troop of thirty soldiers in order by treachery their accustomed migration might be opportunely effected for his purpose. In Phalae, therefore, a craggy part of Tarentum, though which the Pythagoreans must necessarily pass in their journey, the troops were concealed, and when the Pythagoreans, expecting no such thing, came to that place, the soldiers rushed upon them with shouts, after the manner of robbers. But the Pythagoreans fled. But the Pythagoreans in their flight arrived at a certain field sown with beans, and which were in a flourishing conditions. Not being willing to violate the dogma which ordered them not to touch the beans, they stood still, and from necessity attacked their pursuers with stones and sticks, till they had slain some and wounded many of them. All the Pythagorians were at length slain by the thirty soldiers. Nor would any one of them suffer himself to be taken alive, but preferred death to this, conformably to the mandates of their sect. The soldiers were disturbed that they could not bring any one Pythagorean to Dionysius, which was their purpose.

 As they were returning, they happened to meet the Crotonian, Myllias and his wife Timycha, whom the other Pythagoreans had left behind, because Timycha being pregnant, was now in her sixth month, and was walking leisurely..These therefore, the soldiers gladly made captive, and led them to the tyrant.

 But the tyrant having learned what happened was greatly dejected, and said to the two Pythagoreans, "You shall obtain from me honors transcending all others in dignity, if you will consent to reign in conjunction with me." All his offers being rejected by Mylias and Timycha. "If then" said he, "you will only teach me one thing, I will dismiss you with a sufficiently safe guard." Myllias, therefore, asking him what it was he wished.

 "To learn" Dionysius replied, "Why your companions submitted to death, in order that they might not tread upon beans." But Myllias immediately answered, "My companions indeed submitted to death, in order that they might not tread upon beans, but I would rather tread on them, than tell you the cause of this." Dionysis being astonished at this answer, ordered him to be forcibly taken away, but commanded Timycha to be tortured, for he thought, that as she was a woman, pregnant, and deprived of her husband, she would easily tell him what he wanted to know, through fear of the torments. The heroic woman, however, grinding her tongue with her teeth, bit it off, and spit it at the tyrant; evincing by this, that though her sex being vanquished by the torments might be compelled to disclose something, which ought to be concealed in silence, yet the member subservient to the development of it, should be entirely cut off. So much difficulty did they make in admitting foreign friendships, even though they should happen to be royal. 29

 They were not to divulge the teachings to others. If one did so, he was treated as being dead. A tomb would be raised to him.30

 He reminded many of his familiars, by evident indications, of the former life which their soul lived, before it was bound to this body, and that he had been Euphorbus, the son of Panthus, who conquered Patroclus.31

 It is said that as soon as he came to Italy and Sicily, which cities he understood had oppressed each other with slavery, partly at some distant period of past time, and partly at a recent period, he inspired the inhabitants with a love of liberty, and through the means of his auditors, restored to independence and liberated Crotona, Sybaris, Catanes, Rhegium, Himaera, Agrigentum, Tauromenas, and some other cities, for whom also he established laws, through Charondas, and others, by whom they became flourishing cities, and afforded an example worthy of imitation, for a longtime, to the neighboring kingdoms.32

 He said that the principle and doctrine of philosophy is that every life is co-arranged so as to follow God.33 To all those who read this, MAY YOUR NUMBER INCREASE, YOUR SOUND BECOME SWEETER, YOUR COLOR MORE REFINED SO THAT YOU MAY EVENTUALLY BECOME ONE WITH YOUR DIVINE FATHER WITHIN YOU!

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