

## LESSON #1 INTRODUCTION TO PIRKEI AVOT

Welcome! My name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I have been given the enormous honor and privilege of teaching you Pirkei Avot this year! I am excited about our subject, I am excited to get to know each of you, and I am really looking forward to learning and growing together with you.

Pirkei Avot is not just a subject that we learn about, get tested on, and then forget about... In fact, I'm not even going to be testing you on this subject! Pirkei Avot is something we learn that touches on all areas of our lives, ALL the time! It's going to teach us HOW to live our lives, how to interact with others, how to feel about others, how to manage our time, and most importantly, how to connect with Hashem and His Torah, the "wellspring of our lives"! We are going to become better people!

### PIRKEI AVOT -

Does anyone want to try and translate for us? Take suggestions.

A. Commonly translated as "Ethics of our Fathers".

What are ethics? Which "fathers" are we referring to?

B. Chapters of Fundamental Concepts

Pirkei Avot is not about halachot, do's and don'ts, but **MIDDOT** and HOW TO LIVE AN HONORABLE JEWISH LIFE

Is Pirkei Avot part of TANA"CH? (Torah Neviim and Ketuvim)

No, Pirkei Avot is a part of MISHNA, which is part of TORAH SHEBAL PEH. The part of Torah that was passed down ORALLY from generation to generation from Moshe Rabbeinu at Har Sinai. But then, because the oral Torah was starting to be forgotten, it was written down and compiled by R' YEHUDAH HANASI, a great Tanna.

When we received the Torah at Har Sinai, it wasn't just the part of Torah that we read from in shul. Our Torah is divided into two parts - Torah Shebichtav and Torah sheb'al peh. Torah shebichtav is the written Torah. It includes the Chamisha Chumshei Torah, Neviim and Ketuvim. Torah sheb'al peh was the part of Torah that was never written down until it became necessary to do so, as the Jewish nation in galut (diaspora) experienced persecution. Until then, it was forbidden to write it down! (We'll learn more about this in our first mishna when we talk about MESORAH in greater detail.)

Blackboard:

So on the one hand, we have Torah She'bichtav: the Chamishei Chumshei Torah, the Neviim and Kesuvim.

On the other hand, we have Torah She'bal Peh: Mishna, Gemara, Medrash and Kabballa

What IS Torah?

Not just do's and don'ts.

### **TORAH IS DA'AT ELOKIM, HOW HASHEM REVEALS HIS WILL TO HUMANITY.**

Torah Shebichtav and Torah Shebal Peh go together! You must have both in order to understand how Hashem wants us to serve Him!

There's a passuk (verse) in the Torah itself that teaches us this. V'zavachta mibikarcha umitzoncha... Ka'asher Tzivisicha – and you shall slaughter of your herd and flock... as I have commanded you - but we don't see any follow up in the Torah! Torah Shebal Peh includes 5 laws of how to slaughter. Together, we understand what Hashem is commanding us.

Discuss difference between a PERSON and a DOLL.

A Person is a Body and a Neshama, a soul.

A Toy uses a Battery which provides energy.

A Vacuum doesn't work until you plug it in and it uses electricity.

A Ball or Balloon without air vs with air

Torah shebichtav is the body of the Torah.

Torah shebal Peh is the soul of Torah, its lifeforce.

An example of this is a passuk in the Torah that states, Ubisukkos tayshvu shiv'as yamim. The Torah tells us to set in a booth for seven days. But without Torah shebal peh, we'd have no idea when or how to do that! What does a succah look like? etc.

Another example, Lo sivachel giddi ba'chaleiv imo - the Torah says we can't cook a goat in its mothers milk. Our chachamim wise sages, taught us that this means not cooking meat and milk together!)

I'm handing out binders to each of you. At the end of the year, I'm hoping that we will fill it with beautifully decorated pages of Ma'amarei Chazal that we'll learn about in Pirkei Avot. I want you each to savor this binder, and keep it precious to you always.

Activity - Decorating Front and Back of Binder:

Front: Kol Yisroel Yesh Lahem Chelek L'Olam Habbah with student's Name

Back: Ratza Hakadosh Baruch Hu Lizakos Es Yisroel Lefichach Hirba Lahem Torah uMitzvos

Sing Kol Kol Kol Yisroel Yesh Lahem Lahem Cheilek L'Olam Olam Habah....