

Course Name:

**Chapters of the Fathers** **I & II (Pirke Avot)**

**Type of course:** Lecture

**Year of Studies:** 2017-2018 **Semester:** Fall & Spring **Hours/credits:** 2

**Course Description:**

Students learn *Pirke Avot* (*Ethics of the Fathers*), and investigate concepts in Jewish philosophy and ethics. The goal of the course is for students to clarify what the Talmud says about these issues, and develop their own thinking.

BREAKDOWN WEEK BY WEEK, FALL SEMESTER

1. Independent thinkers vs. cult followers

**Additional readings:**

* What Makes a Thinker? Hpps:/news.harvard.edu/gazelle/story/2011/09/what-makes-a-thinker/
* Rabbeinu Yonah on Pirke Avos, Ch.1.1.

1. Jewish psychology: The three core personality traits

**Additional readings:**

* Tom Meyer, Powers of the Soul, Jerusalem, Hemed Press, 2000, pp. 184-198.

1. Creating a Jewish home

**Additional readings:**

* Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, “Marriage”, in Family Redeemed, , KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 2000, pp. 31-72.

# Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik, “Rupture and Reconstruction: The Transformation of Comtemporary Orthodoxy, https://www.lookstein.org/professional-dev/rupture-reconstruction-transformation-contemporary-orthodoxy/print/

1. How do you choose a Rav? And how many true friends can you have?

**Additional readings:**

* Rabbeinu Yonah and Meiri on Pirke Avot, Ch. 1.6.

1. Developing a work ethic

**Additional readings:**

* The Ways of the Tzaddikim, Feldheim Publishers, pp. 295-305.

1. Hillel vs. Shammai

**Additional readings:**

* Rashi, Rabbeinu Yonah, and Meiri on Pirke Avos, Ch. 1.12-13.

1. Hillel vs. Shammai

**Additional readings:**

* Rashi, Rabbeinu Yonah, and Meiri on Pirke Avos, Ch. 1.14-15.

1. Study vs. action

**Course requirements**

* Regular attendance – a maximum of 2 absences will be allowed per semester, including absence due to illness. Excessive absences will result either in lowering of your course grade, or in no credit for the course.
* 2 late appearances will constitute 1 absence.
* All writing assignments must be submitted on the announced due date. Late papers will be docked at least one full letter grade. If you cannot attend class on the day a paper is due, be sure to have someone else bring the paper to class for you.
* Participation in class discussion.
* There will be monthly quizzes.
* The final exam will have three parts: Identification of quotations, short essays and a longer essay on a new quote.

**Required textbooks, other textbooks**

Pirke Avot (Ethics of the Fathers).

The text, in both Hebrew and English translation, will be handed out in class.

Commentaries we will use: Rabbeinu Yonah, Rashi, and Meiri.