



Chapters of the Sages: A Psychological Commentary on Pirkey Avoth

Reuven P. Bulka

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Pirkey Avoth—Chapters of the Sages—is one of the most well known texts in Jewish tradition. It contains the ethical and moral principles guiding the Jewish way of life as handed down by the sages. In essence, it is a guidebook for living.

In this bilingual edition, Reuven P. Bulka, a highly regarded rabbi, author, and editor who also has a Ph.D in psychology, provides the reader with a modern translation of *Pirkey Avoth*, as well as an analysis of the text based on his experience in Torah study and his knowledge of psychology. Much commentary has been written on this important work, yet Rabbi Bulka's commentary differs in that he focuses on the psychological wisdom contained in this classical text. He seeks the thematic connections between each of the chapters, showing that Rabbi Yehuda haNasi, who compiled *Pirkey Avoth*, chose the statements and their order deliberately. Rabbi Bulka does not resort to explication through outside sources but rather offers an understanding of each chapter on its own, giving the reader a springboard to further exploration and elaboration of this most significant work.

Pirkey Avoth is divided into six chapters. The first five deal with different dimensions of existence, including the transmission of Jewish values, the direction of one's "life-path," the means of keeping sanctity in one's life, the values that become part of one's personality, and how Torah is and should be expressed in life. The sixth chapter, also known as "The Acquisition of Torah," focuses on what is meant by a "Torah-true" personality, which is not easily attained but encompasses all that is good in life. Rabbi Bulka has enabled the contemporary reader to access the wisdom of the Jewish sages by presenting *Pirkey Avoth* in a manner applicable to today's world, in today's terms.

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