



# Ethics of the Sages: Pirke Avot—Annotated & Explained (SkyLight Illuminations)

*Rabbi Rami Shapiro*

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The clear and compelling wisdom of the rabbinic sages can become a companion for your own spiritual journey.

At the heart of Judaism is an ethical imperative to live life from your true self, as the image and likeness of God. To do this, you must see the greatness of God manifest in all things, and therefore engage each moment with grace, humility, and justice. This imperative flowers in the words of the early Rabbis (250 BCE–250 CE), who captured God’s call to be holy in Pirke Avot, a collection of pithy sayings on how best to live an ethical life.

This engaging introduction to the wisdom sayings of the rabbinic sages puts you in direct conversation with them, allowing the sages to speak directly to you about what matters in life and how to live it with dignity. With fresh, contemporary translation and provocative commentary, Rabbi Rami Shapiro focuses on the central themes in this Jewish wisdom compendium—study, kindness, compassion. He clarifies the rabbinic proverbs and parables in order to expose the ethical principles at their root. By recalling the ancient voices of the rabbinic sages, he shows us the contemporary significance of their timeless wisdom and distills Pirke Avot not as a book about ethics but as a practical guide to living ethically today.

Now you can experience the wisdom of the early Rabbis even if you have no previous knowledge of Judaism or rabbinic literature. This SkyLight Illuminations edition presents the ethical teachings of the rabbinic sages, with insightful yet unobtrusive commentary that conveys Pirke Avot’s core challenge of God to the Jewish people, and through them all humanity: We are to be holy as God is holy. We are to be, in a human way, what God is in a divine way.

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