Pirkei Avot Sessions #1- Is Everyone Welcome Inside?

1. **The Sages vol. 1 (R. Binyamin Lau, Israel), p. 91**

In the Oral Tradition this period is known as “The Period of the Pairs.” As Greek influence increased, the institution of the priesthood declined, degenerating into an office purchased for money… leadership was increasingly exercised by the Pairs, rabbinic sages whose authority derived primarily from their erudition in Torah and their prestige and popularity among the people at large[[1]](#footnote-0).

1. **Mishna, Avot Ch. 1, 4-5**

Yose ben Yoezer, man of Tsreida, and Yose ben Yochanan, man of Jerusalem, received from him. **Yose ben Yoezer says**, "May your house be a meeting house for Sages, become dirty in the dust of their feet and drink their words thirstily."

**Yose ben Yochanan, man of Jerusalem, says**, "May your home be open wide, may the poor be members of your household...

1. **R. Ovadia of Bartenura (Italy/Israel, 1445-1515), Avot Ch. 1**

**"May your home be open wide"**: Like the home of Avraham, our father, may peace be upon him, which was open to the world’s four directions, so that guests would not need to go around to find the entrance.

1. **Yalkut Me’am Loez (R. Ya’akov Culi, Turkey, 18th century), Avot Ch. 1**

**May the poor be members of your household**. ...To what may this be compared? To a rich man who had two older sons; one rich, and one poor. One day, the rich son received a letter from his father, that he is marrying off his youngest son, and he would like his two sons to be at the wedding. Any financial losses incurred by the son would be repaid by the father. When the rich son read the letter, he immediately went to the store to purchase nice clothing for him and his family in preparation for the trip. He suddenly remembered his poor brother and said to him, ‘travel in my carriage to our father’s city, for he has invited us to our younger brother’s wedding’. When the father heard that they were coming, he went out to greet them with joyous music. The rich son came out of the carriage first; the bride’s parents asked who it was, and they were told it was the son of their *mechutan*; following him was the poor brother who was wearing tattered clothing. The bride’s parents asked who it was, and they were told that he too was a son of their *mechutan*. The father looked ashamed, but held back his anger and did not say a word. He dressed his poor son with nice clothing to remove any further embarrassment. When the *sheva berachot* concluded, the rich son said to his father, ‘I have to go home to my business’. His father said, ‘go in peace’. He realized that his father did not mention the repayment; he took out the letter and said, ‘you promised to repay!’ The father responded, ‘let me read the letter to you carefully’. He read, ‘If you pay money **for my honour**, I will pay you back in full’, he said, ‘you were only concerned with your honour’.

1. **Talmud Bavli, Bava Batra 133b**

Yose b. Yoezer had a son who conducted himself inappropriately. He had an attic filled with *dinarim* and he [Yose b. Yoezer] consecrated it [for the Temple].

1. **Bereishit Rabba, 65**

And he smelled the smell of his garment [*begadav*] and he blessed him” (Bereishit 27:27). This refers to such as Yosef Meshita and Alcimus of Tzerurot...Alcimus [Yakum] of Tzerurot was the nephew of Rabbi Yose b. Yoezer of Tsreida. And he was riding on a horse on Shabbat. Yose b. Yoezer came before the beam on which he was to be crucified. He [Alcimus] taunted R. Yose: “Look at the horse on which my master has let me ride and the horse upon which your Master has made you ride.” He replied to him: “If this is the end of those who anger Him, how much more with those who accomplish His will.” “Has then any man accomplished His will more than you?” he jeered. “If this is the end of those who do His will, how much more with those who anger Him,” he retorted.

These words pierced him like the poison of a snake, and he went and subjected himself to the four modes of execution inflicted by the *Beit Din*: stoning, burning, decapitation, and strangulation. What did he do? He took a post and planted it in the earth, raised a wall of stones around it and tied a cord to it. He made a fire in front of it and fixed a sword in the middle [of the post]. He hanged himself on the post, the cord was burnt through and he was strangled. The sword caught him, while the wall [of stones] fell upon him and he was burnt. Yose b. Yoezer of Tsreida fell into a daze and saw his [Yakum’s] bier flying in the air. “By a few moments he has preceded me into *Gan Eden*,” said he.

1. **Noach v. Avraham**

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| **Bereishit Ch. 7**  7 And Noah went in and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him into the ark because of the flood waters. | **Bereishit Ch. 18**  [1](http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8213/jewish/Chapter-18.htm#v=1) Now the Lord appeared to him in the plains of Mamre, and he was sitting at the entrance of the tent[[2]](#footnote-1) when the day was hot. |

1. **Mishne Torah (R. Moshe b. Maimon, Egypt, 1135-1204), Avodat Kochavim, Ch. 1-3**

Abraham was forty years old when he became aware of his Creator. When he recognized and knew Him, he began to formulate replies to the inhabitants of Ur Kasdim and debate with them, telling them that they were not following a proper path.

...When he overcame them through the strength of his arguments, the king desired to kill him. He was [saved through] a miracle and left for Charan. [There,] he began to call in a loud voice to all people and inform them that there is one God in the entire world and it is proper to serve Him. He would go out and call to the people, gathering them in city after city and country after country, until he came to the land of Canaan - proclaiming [God's existence the entire time] - as [[Genesis 21:33](http://www.chabad.org/8216#v33)] states: "And He called there in the name of the Lord, the eternal God."

When the people would gather around him and ask him about his statements, he would explain [them] to each one of them according to their understanding, until they turned to the path of truth. Ultimately, thousands and myriads gathered around him. These are the men of the house of Abraham.

1. בזוג יש הפרדה והשלמה. זוג - גם במילה זוג, זוג פירושו, דרך אגב, זוג זה מספריים. זוג זה שניים דברים מנוגדים שמשלימים זה את זה (**תכלת מרדכי, וירא תשס"ב**) [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. “L. Finkelstein, *Introduction to the Treatises of Abot and Abot of Rabbi Nathan* (New York: 1950), p. 236, takes a different view of the differences between each one of the first Pair. Yose ben Yoezer was the head of the Beit Din of the more conservative party, consisting of mainly priests and the wealthy class. His students, being primarily members of these families, were therefore educated to make their houses meeting places for the sages. A different path was adopted by Yose ben Yohanan, from whom Beit Hilel developed.” cited in *The Sages* *vol. 1*, p. 99, fn. 8 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)