



INTRODUCTION TO JEWISH ETHICS

GRADE LEVEL: 3-6

ESSENTIAL QUESTION:

How are we as Jewish people taught to act ethically in each Jewish text?

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Student copies of the [Middot Book](#)
- [Pirkei Avot Quotes](#)
- Ball

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CLASSROOM TIME NEEDED:

30 minutes

KIT INCLUDES:

- Teacher instruction outline
- [Middot Book](#) (click [here](#) to download and print)
- [Pirkei Avot Quotes](#)

INTRODUCTION:

This lesson will introduce students to the concepts of Mitzvot and Middot in Jewish thought and to the text of Pirkei Avot.

ACTIVITY 1: INTRODUCTION DISCUSSION

Explain that there are many questions that Judaism seeks to answer, such as: "how do Jews relate to God?" and "how do Jews relate to holiness?" But how do we know how Jews should act?

Ask students introductory questions:

- Have you ever heard of Pirkei Avot? (answer: "Pirkei Avot" means the Ethics of the fathers)
- What are ethics? Which "fathers" are we referring to? (answer: it's a bunch of Rabbis saying life lessons about how we should act)
- In the Torah, there are mitzvot. What are mitzvot? (answer: Commandments).

Explain: In Judaism there are also middot, which are central to the teachings of Pirkei Avot. They are things that we should aspire to do, but aren't commandments. Even though it isn't made up of commandments, Pirkei Avot is important! According to Jewish law, you can't be a judge without having studied Pirkei Avot.



ACTIVITY 2: MATCHING MIDDOT

- Provide students with the list of middot (page 4 and 5 of the [Middot Book](#)) and [Pirkei Avot Quotes](#).
- Instruct students to match each middah to a quote from Pirkei Avot. The goal is for them to interpret what middah represents the statement.

ACTIVITY 3: MIDDOT BOOK (OPTIONAL)

- Provide students with the entire [Middot Book](#)
- Instruct students to decorate the cover and write their name (preferably both in Hebrew and in English)
- Encourage students to use the Middot Bingo on page 2 of the Middot Book during the week to try to embody as many of the middot as they can
- Instruct students to illustrate an example of their favorite middah in action on page 3 of the Middot Book
- Discuss the questions on page 4 of the Middot Book:
 - How can you embody each value?
 - Where do you see these values reflected in Jewish thought, texts, or life?

ACTIVITY 4: GET ACTIVE!

Play this game to review the middot and get active!

Instructions:

- Each person chooses a middah
- Players throw a ball around the circle to each other
- When one player throws the ball at another they have to say the middah of the person to whom they are throwing the ball
- Hesitation or mistakes mean you are out!