

# Beit Hillel/Beit Shammai Smackdown | Class 1

## Congregation Beth Shalom

Source Sheet by Rabbi David Chapman

1

### Pirkei Avot 1:1

(1) Moses received the Torah at Sinai and transmitted it to Joshua, Joshua to the elders, and the elders to the prophets, and the prophets to the Men of the Great Assembly...

### משנה אבות א':א

(א) מֹשֶׁה קִבֵּל תּוֹרָה מִסִּינַי,  
וּמִסָּרָה לְיְהוֹשֻׁעַ, וְיְהוֹשֻׁעַ לְזִקְנִים,  
וְזִקְנִים לְנָבִיאִים, וְנָבִיאִים מִסְּרוּהָ  
לְאַנְשֵׁי כְנֶסֶת הַגְּדוּלָּה...

2

### Pirkei Avot 1:12-15

(12) Hillel and Shammai received [the oral tradition] from them. Hillel used to say: be of the disciples of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing peace, loving mankind and drawing them close to the Torah.

(13) He [also] used to say: one who makes his name great causes his name to be destroyed; one who does not add [to his knowledge] causes [it] to cease; one who does not study [the Torah] deserves death; one who makes [unworthy] use of the crown [of learning] shall pass away.

### משנה אבות א':י"ב-ט"ו

(יב) הֵלֵל וְשַׁמַּאי קִבְּלוּ מֵהֵם.  
הֵלֵל אָמַר, הָיוּ מִתְלַמְּדָיו שֶׁל  
אַהֲרֹן, אוֹהֵב שְׁלוֹם וְרוֹדֵף שְׁלוֹם,  
אוֹהֵב אֶת הַבְּרִיּוֹת וּמְקַרְבֵּן  
לְתוֹרָה:  
(יג) הוּא הָיָה אוֹמֵר, נִגְדַּד שְׁמָא,  
אֲבִד שְׁמָה. וְדָלָא מוֹסִיף, יִסָּף.  
וְדָלָא יִלִּיף, קִטְלָא חִיב.  
וְדַא שְׂתַמְלֵשׁ בְּתַגָּא, חֵלְף:  
(יד) הוּא הָיָה אוֹמֵר, אִם אֵין אָנִי  
לִי, מִי לִי. וְכִשְׂאֲנִי לְעֵצְמִי, מָה  
אָנִי. וְאִם לֹא עֲכָשִׁיו, אֵימְתִי:  
(טו) שְׁמָאֵי אוֹמֵר, עֲשֵׂה תוֹרָתְךָ

(14) He [also] used to say: If I am not for myself, who is for me? But if I am for my own self [only], what am I? And if not now, when?  
 (15) Shammai used to say: make your [study of the] Torah a fixed practice; speak little, but do much; and receive all men with a pleasant countenance.

קִבַּע. אָמַר מְעַט וַעֲשֵׂה הַרְבֵּה,  
 וְהוּי מְקַבֵּל אֶת כָּל הָאָדָם בְּסִכּוּר  
 פָּנִים יְפוֹת:

3

### Avot D'Rabbi Natan 2:9

[*And raise up many students.*] For the House of Shammai, say: One should teach only a person who is wise, humble, of good pedigree, and rich. But the House of Hillel say: Teach everyone, for there were many sinners in Israel, and they were brought close to Torah study, and they came out righteous, kind, and proper.

### אבות דרבי נתן ב'ט'

[והעמידו תלמידים הרבה] שב"ש  
 אומרים אל ישנה אדם אלא למי  
 שהוא חכם ועניו ובן אבות ועשיר  
 וב"ה אומרים לכל אדם ישנה  
 שהרבה פושעים היו בהם  
 בישראל ונתקרבו לתלמוד תורה  
 ויצאו מהם צדיקים חסידים  
 וכשרים:

4

The actual picture of the House of Hillel and the House of Shammai is shrouded in mystery. We know almost nothing about the organizational structure of the Houses and the various institutions associated with them. We do not know how they arrived at their halakhic positions, nor are we familiar with the framework within which they met to debate each other. The term 'House' may denote either a family or a dynasty, but the Houses of Hillel and Shammai were neither. Neither the sages identified as affiliated with the House of Hillel, nor those identified as affiliated with the House of Shammai, belong to a single family. Though the dynasty of the Patriarchs descended from Hillel, the Patriarchs themselves did not necessarily

identify with the views of the House of Hillel. Rabban Gamaliel II of Yavneh illustrates this well: a descendant of Hillel, on several issues he nonetheless upheld—self consistently, it appears—the view of the House of Shammai... The term ‘House’ can also denote a sect or a separatist group, but there is no indication that the Houses were organized as closed frameworks.

- *Haim Shapira, "The Schools of Hillel and Shammai"*