

Hamodia UK (27 March 2019)



Inspiring Darkei Avos Celebration

Over 150 girls from three NW London high schools: Beis Yaakov Grammar, Menorah High and Tiferes, who participated in the Darkei Avos programme over the past two months, learning the first *Perek* of *Pirkei Avos b'al peh*, enjoyed an evening of festive celebration of their achievements.

The evening began with a speech from Rabbi Yitzchok Weitz, Menahel of Beis Yaakov Primary School, and Chinuch Advisor to Darkei Avos. Rabbi Weitz described the programme as “truly outstanding” saying that the lessons learned from studying Pirkei Avos in this way would stay with them forever.

Mrs Esther Reich, founder of Darkei Avos, then spoke, praising the girls for their enthusiasm to learn more Torah. She said that learning Pirkei Avos was a “new gateway to personal growth” enabling the participants to take “the wisdom and heritage of the Taanaim into our everyday lives, impacting not only themselves but those around them.”

The electric atmosphere in the room rose still further as the girls were called up in groups to receive certificates and prizes, according to the amount they had learned. Girls learning up to 10 *Mishnayos* received bronze medals and girls learning up to 17 received silver medals.

One girl from each school was awarded a prize for raising the most money for *Tzedakah* by asking for sponsorship for her learning. Each school also nominated a prize winner for the Middos Award, and these girls received prizes too.

Finally the highlight of the prize giving ceremony came – the presentation of gold medals to the 35 girls from the three schools who had learned the whole of the first *Perek* of *Pirkei Avos b'al peh*. The audience stood up and applauded enthusiastically as they received their gold medals.

During the award ceremony, guests enjoyed a superbly catered meal, with a buffet dessert including freshly made pancakes. The evening was enhanced by remarkable sand-artist Naomi Zeivald, and musical interludes including an especially composed Darkei Avos theme song. A multiple

choice *Pirkei Avos* quiz followed, in which the teams of girls participated very enthusiastically, answering the questions with great excitement. At the end of the evening it was announced that Tiferes High School were the winners of this competition.

After the awards had been presented, Rabbi Shloime Yitzchok Bixenspanner, Rav of Hendon Adath Shul and Rabbincal Authority for Darkei Avos addressed the gathering. He commented on the uniqueness of girls learning *Mishnayos b'al peh* in this way, saying that Rebbetzin Vichna Kaplan, a"h, a student of Sarah Schnirer, a"h, and founder of the Beis Yaakov movement in the USA, instituted girls learning *Pirkei Avos* in this way. Rabbi Bixenspanner said this is because "Maseches Avos was given to *Klal Yisrael* as a tool to learn *Middos tovos*" and is therefore important for the success of every single person, whether man or woman.

Finally Mrs Reich wound up the evening by thanking all those involved in promoting and co-ordinating the Darkei Avos programme. She mentioned specifically Mrs Esther Pearlman, Head Teacher of Menorah High without whose encouragement the programme would not have been launched. Mrs Shoshanah Turner collected an award on behalf of Tiferes, whose pupils collectively learned the most *Mishnayos* and Mrs Pearlman accepted the award on behalf of Menorah High for raising the most money for *Hachnosas kallah* and the participating schools.

Mrs Reich also thanked the Darkei Avos team: Trustee Rebbetzin Dunner; Board members: Dr. Perl, Mrs Weingarten, Mrs Bak and Mrs Levison; Darkei Avos co-ordinator Mrs Chaya Feldman and dinner committee chair and team Mrs Zaltzman and Mrs Sorotzkin, for all their efforts in making the programme and evening such a success. She offered particular thanks to Mrs Baila Ellinson, Executive Director of Darkei Avos who came especially from Eretz Yisrael for the event.

In the final message of the evening the girls were encouraged to continue to empower themselves to be the director of their own destiny and to realise what they have achieved and what they can continue to achieve so that *be'ezras Hashem* they would join together again next year to celebrate another milestone on their journey of mastering *Pirkei Avos*.