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[Home](#) > 48 Ways - 029 Bestowing Torah Upon Others

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## 48 Ways - 029 Bestowing Torah Upon Others

### *The Quality of "Do Not Attribute The Good To Yourself"*

We are very soon approaching the day of the giving of the Torah. The *Mishnah* in *Avos* lists the 48 ways in which the Torah is acquired, and one of them is "One who does not attribute the good to himself."

Elsewhere, there is a *Mishnah* in *Avos* that says, "Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai said: Do not attribute any of the good to yourself, for it is that you were created." This trait, of "not attributing the good to yourself", is not only a quality which one should have, but it is also listed specifically as one of the ways to acquire the Torah.

This needs understanding. Why is this necessary in order to acquire the Torah?

The Gemara (Sanhedrin 93a) says that Nechemia did not merit to have a sefer of *Tanach* written in his name (instead, his sefer is regarded as a continuation of Sefer *Ezra*), because he attributed credit to himself. There are several other places in the Gemara as well where we see that one must not "attribute good" to himself.

There is a *Midrash* that when Moshe ascended to Heaven to receive the Torah, Moshe said to Hashem, "Why are You giving the Torah through me?" Hashem responded, "Be quiet! This is what has arisen in My thoughts." It is explained that Moshe said this because he did not want to "attribute good" to himself. Thus, the giving of the Torah needed to come through Moshe's refusal to contribute any credit for himself. That is the depth of why "not attributing good to oneself" is one of the ways to acquire the Torah - for even Moshe, who was worthy to give the Torah, did not attribute any credit to himself for giving the Torah.

### *"For It Is This That You Were Created" - To Bestow The "Good" of Torah Upon Others*

What we still need to understand, though, is why indeed this is a necessary quality to acquire the Torah. What we see from the above that it was necessary to acquire the Torah, but what we need to understand is: Why?

The *Orchos Tzaddikim* (ch. 26) and the *Shaarei Teshuvah* explain that this quality of "not attributing credit to yourself" is that you should feel like you have done very little, in comparison to how much you could have done. As Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai says, "Do not attribute the good to yourself, for it is that you were created." What is the deeper way to understand "For it is this that you were created"?

As is well-known, there are several reasons given for why Hashem created the world. One of the reasons is explained by the Ramchal, that Hashem has a desire to bestow good upon His creations, and in another place, the Ramchal describes it as “The law of goodness is that it bestows good.” This is the reason for Creation – it is because Hashem desires to bestow good on His creations.

What is it that is “good” for His creations? It is written, “*And as for me, closeness to Hashem is good.*” The Gemara explains that this “good” is Torah, for “There is no good except Torah, for it is written, “*A good purchase I gave to you, My Torah do not abandon.*” This that “there is no good except Torah” is connected with the “good” which Hashem bestows upon His creations.

This is the depth behind why Torah learning must be learned, and taught. One must learn the Torah, and also teach it to others. This is because since the Torah is called “good”, and Hashem wants to bestow good upon His creations, when one has the “good” of Torah he must also teach it to others, to bestow this “good” upon others.

### *Not Keeping The “Good” For Yourself – By Teaching Torah To Others*

Now we can understand why “not attributing the good to yourself” is one of the ways of acquire the Torah. What does it mean not to attribute the good to yourself? From a simple understanding, it is a feeling, of not attributing any credit to yourself. But the *Ramchal* in *Mesillas Yesharim* explains that it means that one must teach Torah to others. If a person only learns Torah for himself and he never teaches is, he is taking the “good” of the Torah, for himself. Instead, a person must teach Torah to others, so that he isn’t keeping the “good” of Torah only for himself.

It is written, “*It is not good for man to be alone.*” When a person connects to Torah, he connects to the “good” which is the Torah – but if he remains in the state of “alone”, learning Torah only for himself, he cannot connect to the “good” of the Torah, for he is remaining in his state of being alone. A person must understand that the Torah is not only for him, but for everyone, and therefore he must teach it to others if he knows it. Hence, “Do not attribute the good to yourself, for it is this that you were created” – this means that one must teach Torah to others, and thus, “for it is this that you were created.”

To the extent that one is not keeping the “good” of Torah for himself, by making sure to teach it to others – one reaches greater understanding in the Torah.

### *Torah Lishmah – Learning Torah For The Sake of Benefitting Others*

**However, this is on condition that one is teaching Torah *lishmah*,<sup>[1]</sup> [1]** and not for any other ulterior intentions, such as seeking honor, etc.

If that condition is met, when one teaches Torah to others, he connects to the “good” of the Torah.

We are now in the days of preparing to receive the Torah, and one of the 48 ways to acquire the Torah is “not to attribute good to oneself” when it comes to Torah, which we have explained here to mean that one must not keep the “good” of Torah to himself. This is essentially the concept of learning Torah *lishmah*.

The Gemara says that meaning of a “*Toras Chessed*”, a Torah of kindness, is when one learns Torah and teaches it to others. When one learns Torah but he does not learn it *lishmah*, he is learning Torah only in order to receive benefits from it, for himself. Such a person will only learn Torah for himself and he does not teach it to others. Such Torah learning is not called *Toras Chessed*. When one learns Torah *lishmah*, he teaches it to others, because he is not only learning for himself. Such Torah learning is called *Toras Chessed*.

Thus, learning Torah in order to teach Torah to others and benefit them is called *Torah lishmah*. To the degree that one connects to the depth of teaching Torah to others, which is to learn Torah *lishmah*, one receives the abundant blessings of the Torah.

### *The Way To Prepare For Receiving The Torah*

When one prepares for the day of the giving of the Torah, Shavuot, by simply reading and reviewing his Torah learning to himself, his Torah learning is not able to receive the abundant blessings of Torah. But if he is learning Torah in order to teach it others (assuming that his intentions are *lishmah*, and not if he is doing so out of various reasons that are not *lishmah*) – this is the true level of Torah, and accordingly, his comprehension in Torah will be greater.

One should consider himself merely as a “pipeline” through which the words of Torah flow through, to others, and that his existence is for the purpose of teaching Torah to others. That is the depth of how to receive the Torah. Without this understanding, one’s Torah learning is only on the level of the second set of the *Luchos*, and he is missing the level of the first set of *Luchos*, which represent Torah *lishmah*.

To the degree that one understands that bestowing Torah upon others is one of the fundamental ways of acquire Torah, that is how much abundant blessing of comprehension in the Torah he will receive.

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[1] [2] The Rav has several shiurim which explain the levels of learning Torah *lishmah*. Refer to the shiurim of **נפש החיים. שער ד**

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#### **Links**

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