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## 48 Ways - 001 Learning from Others

### ***“Talmud”: Learning from Others***

The Torah was given to all Jews – men, women and children. This shows us that all of us must prepare for the Torah – men, women, and children.

The *Mishnah* in *Avos* says that the Torah is acquired through 48 *kinyanim* (qualities). It is well-known that in the 49 days of *Sefiras HaOmer*, a person should prepare for the Torah by using each day of the *Omer* to work on acquiring each of the 48 qualities, so that by the time he gets to Day 49, he has hopefully reached all of the 48 qualities<sup>[1]</sup> [1].

The first *kinyan* stated in the *Mishnah* that one needs for the Torah is “*Talmud*”, learning. The simple meaning of this is that one needs to learn the Torah diligently, in order to be able to acquire the Torah.

However, *sefer Midrash Shmuel* explains that “*talmud*” means for one to be eager to learn from all people, as the Sages state that a wise person is one who learns from everyone; and that he always be eager to learn more and more from others, to learn from others’ good deeds and *middos*. This, the *Midrash Shmuel* states, shows that he is thirsty to know more Torah, like one who is thirsty for more water.

According to his interpretation, the first *kinyan* that one needs to acquire the Torah is not just to simply learn the Torah, but to learn from all people. It means not only to learn Torah from other people, but to learn from their *middos* and actions.

### ***Why We Should Learn From Others***

Chazal say, “Who is wise? One who learns from all people.” Why did Hashem design the world this way that we have to learn from all people? Why don’t we just go learn by people who are reliable and knowledgeable? Why must we learn from all people?

On a simple level, this is because we must learn how to be humble, because it makes one lower himself to others. That is true, but that is not the root of the matter.

When we stood at Sinai to receive the Torah, we were all *k’ish echad b’lev echad*, “like one man, with one heart.” In order to receive the Torah, a person’s soul has to be “*like one man, with one heart*”. We must be unified. But if each person is only for himself – for example, if each person only *davens* for his own spiritual growth, but not for others’ – he does not share one heart with his brethren, and he will

not be able to receive the effect of the giving of the Torah. In order to be worthy of receiving the Torah, we must all be *"like one man, with one heart."*

All 600,000 souls of the Jewish people are really interconnected, and each soul receives from the other. This is the power of *achdus* (unity) in Creation – the concept to be unified with others.

This is really the idea behind the first *kinyan* necessary in acquiring the Torah – to learn from others, because one has to become unified with Creation.

### ***The Torah Is About Unity***

When a person *davens*, he has his own personal requests. There are other parts of *davening* in which we *daven* not for ourselves, but for the Jewish people as a whole. *Tefillah* is both for ourselves and for others.

*Tefillah* can be private, but the Torah has no part in it which is private; the entire Torah is for all of the Jewish people.

That is why the Torah was given to us by Moshe Rabbeinu -- his soul was equal to all 600,000 souls in the nation. Moshe didn't receive the Torah for himself – he received it all for the sake of the nation.

It is only when a person understands that his heart must be unified with others (*"b'lev echad"*) that he can really survive spiritually. This is the true way to prepare for the Torah – to realize what *achdus* (unity) of the Jewish people is. We must realize that we do not exist for ourselves, but only because of a greater whole – the entire Jewish people, every single soul.

We say in the silent prayer of the festivals, *"You chose us from all the nations."* When Hashem chose us as the chosen nation, did He choose each Jew individually, or did He choose the Jewish nation as a whole? He chose us as a whole, not individually. This shows us that we are only deserving of receiving the Torah if we realize that we are part of a greater whole of the Jewish people, and that we do not deserve the Torah on our own.

### ***Love and Trust In a Relationship***

What connects the Jewish people together?

The power of *ahavah*, love, is the connecting force in Creation. A person has a *mitzvah* to "love every Jew, like himself". That is one way how we connect to others: through *ahavas Yisrael*, the power to love other Jews. Another way we can connect to others is through the power of *imun*, which is called 'trust' – the ability to be trusting and loyal to another.

These are the two ways how we connect to others: through love (*ahavah*), and through trustworthiness (*imun*) towards others.

Loving another Jew "like yourself" is called the "great rule" of the entire Torah (as stated by the sage Rabbi Akiva). Why? It is because the whole essence of the Torah is to love another Jew. That is one kind of connection with others: love.

The other way to connect to another is by trusting him. This is a different kind of connection. When I trust someone else, that doesn't necessarily mean that I love him, and if I love him, this doesn't mean that I trust him. Business partners trust each other, but that doesn't mean they love each other. They are mainly concerned for their own interests, and not for the other. So loyalty and trust is a different kind of connection to another than love.

In reality, we must be able to have both abilities, in order to truly create a sense of unity with another. A real bond is when I love the other person *and* I trust him and am loyal to him. If one of these elements is missing, it cannot be called a true bond.

If I love someone, I can easily overlook his faults by judging him favorably. But how do I trust someone when I don't know anything about him? From where does the ability to trust come from? We will explain how.

There is no person who doesn't have ups and downs in our relationship with Hashem. The whole issue is just *how connected we are* to Hashem. A person needs to develop a place in his soul which is *constantly* connected to Hashem, an ability of loyalty to Him, and then even when he has his ups and downs, he still remains connected with Hashem. That is the idea behind *emun*\loyalty in our relationship with Hashem.

When a person trusts another, even if the other wrongs him, he still maintains his trust in him. That is the whole idea of trust: it is loyalty. To illustrate, if a husband and wife are not loyal to each other, they end up getting divorced.

But Hashem loves us even when we sin against Him. That is true loyalty – He never separates from us. Just like a father cannot part from his child even when the child wrongs him, so does Hashem never disconnect from us even when we sin against Him.

### ***How To Become Worthy of Receiving the Torah***

These words might seem very far from us, but that is only because we are so far from the event of receiving the Torah.

Why is it that every year we must prepare ourselves again anew for the Torah? Why must we return to this level every year? It is because we have fallen from the level of receiving the Torah – we have become distant from the Torah. We need to return to our original source, the way we were when we accepted the Torah.

Why does receiving the Torah seem so far from us? It is indeed far, because we are far from the level of receiving it. But if we want to receive the Torah, we need to realize how important it is to love all Jews, and how this is essentially the way to prepare for the Torah. That was how we were at the time of the giving of the Torah – everyone was *“like one man, with one heart.”*

Let us explain this in an even simpler way. Imagine someone who is deathly ill, who is also having pain in his feet. Is he thinking about the pain in his foot? Of course not, because his life is in danger. He has a lot more to worry about than his foot.

We are also very sick – in that we have fallen from our level in Torah. We don't think about others, because we are focused on our general problem of being so far from the Torah. But it's still a sickness not to love others.

To prepare for the Torah, we need to love other Jews, and we also need to really believe that all Jews are like brothers. We need **both** love and trust with others if we are to really connect to others. Love without trust is not a real relationship, and trust without love is not either a real relationship.

We must realize that our connection to fellow Jews can never cease, and we must believe in this. If we have this belief, then we have trust in each other, and this completes our love with each other.

Learning Torah is not just a 'private' aspect in your life – it is something which belongs to the entire

Jewish people. So if a person wants to receive the Torah, he must realize that the Torah is not his private gift – it is a gift for the entire Jewish people, who are his brethren.

Recognize this and believe in this, and then you will be connected in unity with the Jewish people. This will make you worthy of receiving the Torah.

### ***In Conclusion***

What do I want by telling you all this? This isn't *mussar*. I am just saying what life is about.

If someone converts to Judaism, what change does he undergo? He is totally changed; he has gone from non-Jew to Jew. His previous life is over, and he has begun a new life. He is like a newborn baby.

If one doesn't realize the *achdus* (unity) of the Jewish people, then he considers the Torah be something 'private' which he wants, and this will not be enough to qualify for 'receiving' the Torah.

*Tefillah* (prayer) is personal, but Torah is for everyone. Torah is about giving yourself over to it totally, to undergo a total change – just like someone who converts to Judaism.

This is a whole new attitude on life; it is not just another detail going in life. It is the very attitude to have *about* life.

Why don't we see that much "*Toras Emes*" (truthful Torah) in today's times? It is because most people do not have this awareness.

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[1] [2] Editor's Note: Obviously, it cannot be reached perfectly, but each person on his own can strive as much as he can to acquire somewhat each of the 48 qualities necessary to acquire the Torah.

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**Source:** <https://bilvavi.net/english/48-ways-001-learning-others>

#### **Links**

[1] file:///D:/DATA-

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[2] file:///D:/DATA-

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