



Adapted from the sefer חמין במוצאי שבת a collection of maamarim on
תנא דבי אליהו given by the Tolner Rebbe shlita at Melave Malka

Melave Malka Parshas Bamidbar 5765

"לעולם יקנה אדם חבר לעצמו ויאכל עמו, כדי שיקרא עמו וישנה עמו, ויגלה לו
סתרי תורה, וסתרי דרך ארץ. שנאמר (במדבר כ"ז/י"ח) ויאמר ה' אל משה קח לך את
יהושע בן נון איש אשר רוח בו. קח לך איש גברתן וענוותן כמורך, מאי 'קח לך'? אלא
ללמדך שאין חבר נקנה אלא בלקיחה, ואין חבר נקנה אלא בדמים.

"One should always acquire for himself a good friend and eat with him,
so that he will learn and review with him, and reveal to him the secrets
of Torah, and the secrets of *derech erez*. ויאמר ה' אל משה קח לך את
(And Hashem said to Moshe take to yourself
Yehoshua bin Nun, a man of spirit)

These words of Eliyahu Hanavi support the commentary of the Sfas Emes
(Avos 1:6), R. Yehoshua ben Prachya says, "make for yourself a *Rav* and
acquire for yourself a *chaver*". The Sfas Emes points out that R.
Yehoshua ben Prachya used the term עשה לך, to describe the process of
finding a *Rav*, and the term קנה לך to describe the process of finding a
friend. He explains this discrepancy by telling us that, "It could very well
be that it is more necessary to acquire a friend than a *Rav*, because he
can be *mekabel* more from his friend."

This is an amazing *chidush*! The Sfas Emes tells us that in order to acquire
Torah, it is more important to acquire a friend than it is to find a *Rav*.
Eliyahu Hanavi points out that even Moshe Rabeinu, who learned Torah
from Hakadosh Baruch Hu himself, was told that even he needed to take
Yehoshua to be his *chaver*.



[1]

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There is hidden background to the Mishnah that instructs us to acquire a friend. The author of that Mishnah is R. Yehoshua ben Prachya, who was the Rav of “*oso ha’ish yimach shemo*”. This information appears in Maseches Sotah (47a), but can be found in greater detail in the *sefer Kevutzas Ha’hashmatos*, that printed portions of *Shas* that were removed by non-jewish censors. The Raavad writes in his *Sefer Ha’kabbalah*, “writers of history say that Yehoshua ben Prachya was the Rav of yeshu ha’notzri”.

This may have been part of R. Yehoshua ben Prachya’s intention when he taught us to acquire a friend. Those who chronicled that generation write that “*oso ha’ish yimach shemo*”, used to isolate himself from other people for periods of time, as *Bilaam ha’rasha* did. R. Yehoshua ben Prachya warns us not to follow the path of isolation that led to the downfall of his student.

We should note that Eliyahu Ha’navi emphasized **ויאכל עמו**, eating together, as the first step towards acquiring a friend. Only afterwards does he continue, “so that he will learn with you, and review with you, and reveal to you the secrets of Torah and the secrets of *derech erez*.” Eating together begins the process that leads to learning and review. Chazal taught us, (Maseches Sanhedrin 103b) **גדולה לגימה שמקרב** (Eating together has a great power to bring people close). It is well known that *seudas mereim*, friends joining together for a meal, is a fundamental aspect of *avodas chasidim v’anshei maaseh*. It provides us with an opportunity to implement our aspiration of elevating all day-to-day activities and including them in our *avodas Hashem*.

In Maseches Brachos (63b), “R. Yehoshua began speaking in honor on the Torah, and said a *drashah* on the *pasuk*, (Devarim 27:9) **הִסְכַּת וְשָׁמַע** (Pay attention and listen *Yisrael* today you have become a nation). The word **הִסְכַּת** means that you should form **כתות** (groups) and involve yourselves in Torah, for the Torah can only be acquired in a *chaburah*. As R. Yossi the son of R. Chanina said, ‘What is



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meant by the *pasuk*, (Yirmiyahu 50:36), חָרֵב אֶל הַבְּדִים וְנָאֲלוּ (A sword is upon the impostors and they shall become foolish)? It means that a sword is upon “the enemies of talmidei chachamim” (a euphemism for talmidei chachamim) who sit by themselves and study Torah. Also, this way of learning leads them to become progressively more stupid... and to sin”.

All of this teaches us that joining a *chaburah* is a prerequisite for *kabbalas Ha'Torah* and for *kinyan Ha'Torah*. In *Pirkei Avos* (6:5-6), Chazal list the forty-eight ways of life that are ways to acquire Torah. Among them, we find *dibuk chaveirim*, uniting with friends. Someone who tries to learn without joining other people, won't progress. He will actually regress, descending to ever-deepening levels of stupidity and sinfulness.

In his *sefer Semichas Chachamim*, (Brachos 63b) the *gaon* and *mekubal* Rav Naftali Katz zt”l explains Yirmiyahu's image of “a sword upon *talmidei chachamim* (who learn by themselves). Chazal (Bereishis Rabbah 27:22) explain the *pasuk* (Breishis 27:22) הַקֹּל קוֹל יַעֲקֹב וְהַיָּדִים יְדֵי עֵשָׂו - to mean that the hands of Eisav have no power when the voice is the voice of Yaakov (the sound of Torah learning). He says that the repetition of the word *kol* teaches us that only when two people learn together, does their Torah protect us from the sword of Eisav. If people learn by themselves, we lack that protection, leaving us vulnerable to the sword of Eisav *chas v'shalom*.

B'siyata D'shmaya, we also find the concept of *dibuk chaveirim* in *Parshas Bamidbar*. The *Midrash Rabbah* explains that the first *pasuk*, וְיִדְבַּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה בְּמִדְבַּר סִינַי teaches us that “whomever doesn't make himself *hefker* (ownerless and accessible to all) like the desert, cannot acquire the wisdom of Torah.”

A person can only be “desert - like” in his learning If he is part of a *chaburah*. Someone who is arrogant and confident in his own wisdom and Torah knowledge will never experience *dibuk chaveirim*. Chazal (*Bava Basra* 95a) declare that “Whoever is arrogant isn't even accepted by his



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own family”. He certainly won’t be accepted as part of a *chaburah*. The very essence of a *chaburah* is created by each member’s ability to set aside an opinion he holds and to accept the opinion of others.

The Maharsha (*Maseches Makos* 10a) says that “Those who learn by themselves make mistakes. However, when people learn together, if one person makes a mistake, one of the others points it out to him. That is why *Chazal* said that people who learn by themselves become sinners. They will often make mistakes and declare something forbidden to be permissible, and something *tamei* to be *tahor*.”

An arrogant person won’t be able to benefit from the “corrective” aspect of a *chaburah*. He comes in believing that no one can match his level of understanding and is confident that he is always right. If one of the *chaveirim* tries to point out his mistake, he will refuse to accept his correction. That is why *Chazal* tell us that only someone who is *mafkir* himself, and is as open to everyone as the desert is open to everyone, can acquire the wisdom of Torah.

Eliyahu Hanavi reveals another secret. Even Moshe Rabeinu, the *Raaya Mehemna* who learned the Torah directly from Hakadosh Baruch Hu, was commanded קח לך את יהושע, to take Yehoshua not only as a *talmid*, but as a *chaver*. This remarkable explanation teaches us that *dibuk chaverim* is such a fundamental element of *avodas Hashem*, that even Moshe Rabeinu needed a *chaver*.

Each of us, young and old, need to acquire a *chaburah* of good friends with whom he can eat, drink and learn. By learning from each other, they can even reach the level of *sisrei Torah*, the hidden wisdom of the Torah. If someone doesn’t join others, but simply isolates himself, he will be missing one of the important factors necessary for the acquisition of Torah.

On the other hand, just as it is a *mitzvah* to seek out good friends, it is important to take great care to avoid negative friends. Such a friend can



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cause a person to descend to the lowest levels possible. Extreme caution is especially necessary in our generation who constantly face *nisyonos* that are even more difficult than those of previous generations. Today, people can be corrupted by negative friends who don't even live in the same country. This is one of the many ways that so many people are negatively impacted by their interaction with computers and technology. Our daily request, הצילני מחבר רע, asking Hashem to save us from negative friends, is more relevant than ever.

We are approaching Shavuot, the day of Matan Torah. My ancestor the *Meor Einayim* zt"l said in his commentary on *Parshas Miketz*, "When any of the time dependent *mitzvos* in the Torah come about, the same power that was present at the time we were first commanded to perform the *mitzvah*, awakens again. On Shavuot, each person receives the Torah. This determines with what *sechel* he will serve Hashem that year."

In his commentary on *Parshas Emor*, he wrote, "For this reason Hashem Yisbarach commanded us to count seven weeks which correspond to the seven clean days counted by the *niddah*. This enables us to experience the great *taanug* of *kabbalas HaTorah*. For on every Shavuot we receive the Torah, as Chazal explained (*Tanchuma Yisro* 7), 'It is as if it is given today.' There is no greater *taanug* than *kabbalas haTorah* which is the יחוד פנים בפנים, as the *pasuk* says (*Devarim* 5:4), פָּנִים בְּפָנִים דִּבֶּר ה' עִמָּכֶם בְּהָר מִתּוֹךְ הָאֵשׁ (face to face Hashem spoke to you on the mountain from within the fire).

Now is the time to prepare our hearts to be accessible to all like the desert, and to bond with good friends. This will enable us to receive the Torah on the day of Matan Torah, הבא עלינו לטובה אכי"ר



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