

48 Ways of Torah/Wisdom

(To discuss each evening as a family)

The Counting of the Omer is the building of anticipation for arriving at Shavuot (Pentecost), commemorating the giving of the Torah at Sinai. We prepare ourselves for the receiving of the Torah during these fifty days by studying and discussing these “48 Ways of Wisdom”¹ which are enumerated in Pirkei Avot as the qualities by which a person acquires Torah. We study one quality each day from the beginning of the Counting of the Omer until Shavuot. I pray you will enjoy this as much as we have.

Torah is greater than the priesthood or sovereignty, for sovereignty is acquired with thirty virtues, the priesthood with twenty-four, and Torah is acquired with forty-eight qualities. These are: study, listening, verbalizing, comprehension of the heart, awe, fear, humility, joy, purity, serving the sages, companionship with one's contemporaries, debating with one's students, tranquility, study of the scriptures, study of the Mishnah, minimizing engagement in business, minimizing socialization, minimizing pleasure, minimizing sleep, minimizing talk, minimizing gaiety, slowness to anger, good heartedness, faith in the sages, acceptance of suffering, knowing one's place, satisfaction with one's lot, qualifying one's words, not taking credit for oneself, likableness, love of G-d, love of humanity, love of charity, love of justice, love of rebuke, fleeing from honor, lack of arrogance in learning, reluctance to hand down rulings, participating in the burden of one's fellow, judging him to the side of merit, correcting him, bringing him to a peaceful resolution [of his disputes], deliberation in study, asking and answering, listening and illuminating, learning in order to teach, learning in order to observe, wising one's teacher, exactness in conveying a teaching, and saying something in the name of its speaker. Thus we have learned: One who says something in the name of its speaker brings redemption to the world, as is stated, "And Esther told the king in the name of Mordechai." (Avot 6:6)

1. Study
2. Listening
3. Verbalizing
4. Comprehension of the Heart
5. Awe
6. Fear / Reverence
7. Humility
8. Joy
9. Purity
10. Serving the Sages / Honoring the Wise
11. Companionship With One's Contemporaries
12. Debating With One's Students
13. Tranquility
14. Study of the Scriptures
15. Study of the Mishnah
16. Minimizing Engagement in Business
17. Minimizing Socialization
18. Minimizing Pleasure

¹ Yes, there are 50 and not 48. I don't know why, because I haven't studied them enough yet.

19. Minimizing Sleep
20. Minimizing Talk
21. Minimizing Gaiety
22. Slowness to Anger
23. Good Heartedness
24. Faith in the Sages
25. Acceptance of Suffering
26. Knowing One's Place
27. Satisfaction With One's Lot
28. Qualifying One's Words
29. Not Taking Credit for Oneself
30. Likableness
31. Love of G-D
32. Love of Humanity
33. Love of Charity
34. Love of Justice
35. Love of Rebuke
36. Fleeing from Honor
37. Lack of Arrogance in Learning
38. Reluctance to Hand Down Rulings
39. Participating in the Burden of One's Fellow
40. Judging Him to the Side of Merit
41. Correcting Him
42. Bringing Him to a Peaceful Resolution [of His Disputes]
43. Deliberation in Study
44. Asking and Answering
45. Listening and Illuminating
46. Learning in Order to Teach
47. Learning in Order to Observe
48. Making One's Teacher Wiser
49. Exactness in Conveying a Teaching
50. Saying Something in the Name of Its Speaker.