

## **Transcript: What Does a *Beit Midrash* Look Like?**

*Note: The transcripts in this webcase are excerpted from longer classroom discussions. They are not intended for use independent of the videos which they accompany.*

**Teacher:** So we've been talking about "*tovim hashnaim min ha'echad.*" And how two people can be better when they are working together. Now I am going to show you a picture. Some pictures.

I want you to take a look at these pictures. You might recognize some of the people. Other people you may not recognize. And I want you to share what you notice when you look at these people who are working together.

Eli, what do you notice?

**Eli:** I notice that in six<sup>1</sup> they are reading papers that they can both share and that they can help with their work.

**Teacher:** So they are using papers and text. It looks like there are some Jewish texts right there too.

**Halle:** One of the guys is pointing to the page, and the other guy...

**Sophia:** Wait, which number is that?

**Halle:** Eight.

**Teacher:** Number eight. So they are pointing and reading a text. Ok. How about number nine. What do you see, Sam, in number nine?

**Sam:** That they are working together.

**Teacher:** More specific. Give me specific things that you see that prove that they are working together.

**Sam:** Talking and reading.

**Teacher:** Who's talking?

**Sam:** Rebecca and Matthew.

**Teacher:** And what is Matthew doing?

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<sup>1</sup> The pictures students are referring to are labeled by numbers.

**Sam:** Listening.

**Teacher:** And how do you know that?

(Students start calling out)

**Teacher:** Hold on, hold on. What's Rebecca doing?

**Student:** Rebecca is talking.

**Teacher:** So what's happening there? One person is [pauses].

**Sam:** Helping the other person get their work done.

**Teacher:** Well, you don't know that. You don't know that for sure. But what do we know by looking at the picture?

**Mr. B.:** I know, I know.

**Teacher:** Mr. B.

**Mr. B.:** One person is talking and one person is listening and looking.

**Teacher:** Do you think you could make a prediction about what we're going to be doing?

(Students call out.)

**Teacher:** Yeah, you're going to get a chance to do paired learning also.

I want to introduce to you a new Hebrew word--it's actually not a Hebrew word--but we are going to be using it to describe what you're going to be doing, the paired learning. So I want you now to take a look at this word here.

(Some students call out "*havruta*.")

**Teacher:** Havruta. And I wrote it here in transliteration. And I want you to look at that word there in Hebrew. And see, don't call it out. I want you to raise your hand. What root or what other word do you notice in the word havruta? Take a second to think about it.

**Teacher:** Ok, Kaniel, what word do you see?

**Kaniel:** *Haver*.

**Teacher:** *Haver*. And what does *haver* mean?

(Students call out “partners,” “friend”.)

**Teacher:** Friend.

**Teacher:** Why do you think there is the word “*haver*” in the word *havruta*? Mr. G what do you think?

**Mr. G:** I think because they are helping each other and *haver* means helper. They have to work together to succeed. So they are both helping.

**Teacher:** Anybody want to build off of what Ben said? Or say something different? Halle?

**Halle:** Um, because working together can show friendship.

**Teacher:** Working together can show friendship. Right. Do you need to be best friends-bff-with your *havruta*?

(Students call out "no".)

**Teacher:** No, you don't need to be. Are we BFF?

**Sophia:** No

**Teacher:** No. But what are we going to do when we're sitting together as *havruta*?

**Jake:** Be friendly

**Teacher:** Be friendly. What else?

**Kaniel:** Act like you're friends sort of.

**Teacher:** You act like you're a friend. So if I sit down with Sophia what might I say to be friendly like a friend?

(Students call out “hello” “hi”.)

**Teacher:** “Hi. How are you?” How is that going to change the work environment?

**Kaniel:** Because you're being nice and she's going to be nice to you.

**Teacher:** Yes. I'll say, "Hi. How are you? She'll go-

**Sophia:** Good.

**Teacher:** And then what?

**Sophia:** "Hi. How are you?"

**Teacher:** Right then she would give it back. Wouldn't you do that? Isn't that normally what happens when someone sits down with you, across from you and says "Hi. You're my partner today. How are you". Do a quick little check in. Right. Does anybody else have any other connections with the *haver and havruta* part? Mr. G., you're full of ideas today. I love it.

**Ben G:** I probably know this because it's pretty dangerous to sail all by yourself. Seriously.

**Ben B:** Unless it's a special boat that's meant to sail with only one person.

**Teacher:** So how does that connect to seeing *haver* in *havruta*.

**Ben G:** It's better two people sailing than one.

**Teacher:** So here the word *havruta* means two people working together to study a Jewish text. Specifically. That's the word. Or when two people sit down together for it. So for "*tovim hashnaim min haechad*" it could be any two people. We're now going to be focusing on Ben, studying together for the specific purpose of studying the Jewish text. Now do you think this is the first time you will be studying in *havrutot*?

(Students respond "no".)

**Teacher:** No. Because when else do you study in *havrutot*? Maybe you didn't call it *havrutot* or *havruta*. But when in the school have you studied in *havruta*.

**Kaniel:** Jewish Studies.

**Teacher:** Jewish Studies time. When you studied...which Jewish text?

**Jake:** The Torah.

**Teacher:** The Torah. Maybe a piece of t'fillah.

**Sophia:** Noach

**Teacher:** Noach. That's your current Torah portion that you're studying. Does Miriam ever pair you up and you study a *pasuk* together?

( Students respond "Sometimes" "yea.")

**Teacher:** Now I guess we tricked you because all this time you've already been studying in *havruta*. Now we're going to be doing something a little bit different though. Because we are going to create a *beit midrash*.

**Hallie:** A what?

**Teacher:** A *beit midrash*. Let's take a look at the words. What's a *beit sefer*?

(Student calls out "school".)

**Boy:** A house.

**Teacher:** A house of

**Boy:** A house of books.

**Teacher:** Of books which is also called a

**Boy:** Library

**Boy:** School

**Teacher:** A school. A *beit midrash*

**Boy:** A house of *midrash*

**Teacher:** A house of *midrash*. A house of these stories. A house of learning. Now if you go to a *beit midrash* do you know what you're going to find?

**Boy:** Lots of *midrash*.

**Teacher:** Lots of *midrash*. In the books. You'll find the text. What else do you need? How do we make those texts come alive? What else do we need? They can't just sit there on the shelf.

(Students call out "read it")

**Teacher:** We need to read it. So what else do we need?

**Hallie:** Partners

**Teacher:** Partners. We need people. We need to fill up the *beit midrash*.

**Teacher:** Our *beit midrash* is going to happen in our classroom. And the way that we are going to mark the space as different is we are going to transform our typical seating arrangement into these cool set ups where you study with your havruta across from you with the desk flipped a different way. Now why do you think I maybe flipped it that way? So that you are at one desk sitting together? What do you think?

**Jake:** So you won't reach inside the desk and you can look at each other.

**Teacher:** You can look at each other. So we're going to be able to be making eye contact. Good, what else is this set-up going to help with?

**Sophia:** Listening.

**Teacher:** Listening. Why?

**Sophia:** Because when you are looking at someone you can, like, listen better. And you're going to actually pay attention.

**Teacher:** Yes, we're going to be paying attention better. We're going to be able to listen better.