

מוקדש
לב"ק אדמו"ר מלך המשיח



לזכות

הילדה - חיילת ב"צבאות ה'" - חי' דינה בת מלכה צבי'
נולדה ביום ו' עש"ק פ' תולדות, ה' כסלו ה'תשע"א-ופרצת
יה"ר שיזכו הורי' לגדלה לתורה ולחופה ולמעשים טובים
ומתוך הרחבה



לזכות

הילדה - חיילת ב"צבאות ה'" - סימא חסיא בת שיינא נולדה
ביום ד' כ"ב טבת, ה'תשע"א-ופרצת
יה"ר שיזכו הורי' לגדלה לתורה ולחופה ולמעשים טובים
ומתוך הרחבה



לזכות

הרה"ח הרה"ת ר' צבי מרדכי בן שרה לרגל יום הולדתו ח' טבת
וזוגתו שלומית בת שושנה לרגל יום הולדתה ד' שבט
ולזכות בנם משה לרגל יום הולדתו ט"ז טבת
לשנת הצלחה בגו"ר
ולזכות בניו ובנותיו:
יוסף יצחק, מנחם מענדל, חנה וחי' מושקא
שיחיו גודמאן



יחי אדוננו מורנו ורבינו מלך המשיח לעולם ועד

a CALL to **ACTION**

RAMBAM

LEARNING MISHNEH TORAH &
THE DAILY STUDY INITIATIVE

PRACTICAL INSTRUCTION
FROM THE TEACHINGS OF THE REBBE
5748-5752

A PROJECT OF

HaMaaseh Hu HaIkar



a CALL to ACTION

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- The³⁸ daily portion of *Sefer HaMitzvos* should be in those *mitzvos* whose laws are discussed in the daily portion of *Mishneh Torah* (i.e., and not following the order of the *mitzvos* as presented in *Sefer HaMitzvos*). Thus all Jews will learn the same *mitzvos* at one time: Those who are capable of it — at length in *Mishneh Torah*; others — briefly in *Sefer HaMitzvos*.
- During those days when the Introduction of *Mishneh Torah* (and the enumeration of *mitzvos*, etc.) is being studied, those who learn *Sefer HaMitzvos* should learn part of the Introduction to *Sefer HaMitzvos* and the fourteen “Principles” (the rules as to how to ascertain which are the six hundred and thirteen *mitzvos*) written by Rambam at the beginning of *Sefer HaMitzvos*.
- In some instances, the laws of *Mishneh Torah* concerning a *mitzvah* (or *mitzvos*) are learned over a number of days greater than the number of *mitzvos* which the laws discuss. Those who learn *Sefer HaMitzvos* should in those days repeat the study of the daily portion corresponding to the laws then being discussed in *Mishneh Torah*. In addition, they should (within a few days) complete the study of the fourteen “Principles.”
- There are also some instances in which a section of *Mishneh Torah* deals with laws concerning which there is no *mitzvah* of the 613 *mitzvos*. Those who learn *Sefer HaMitzvos* should in those days study those *mitzvos* which correspond to the content of the laws in *Mishneh Torah*; and in certain cases, should learn the actual laws in *Mishneh Torah*. The full details will be found in the calendar which has been published for the benefit of those who learn *Sefer HaMitzvos*.

Foreword

We are pleased to bring you this edition of *a CALL to ACTION* for the very first time. Translated from its Hebrew counterpart, *HaMaaseh Hu Halkar*, this presentation is a collection of practical instruction from the Rebbe’s *sichos* pertaining to the study of Rambam.

HaMaaseh Hu Halkar is a compilation of *hora’os* culled from the Rebbe’s talks in the years 5748-5752 (1988-1992), from both edited and unedited sources (*muga* and *bilti muga*). This English translation was rendered by **Rabbi Yaakov Paley**.

For *a CALL to ACTION* associated with the 20th of Teves, 24th of Teves and the preparations for Yud Shvat, log on to www.iChossid.com. Please take the time to print and share with others.

At this time, when *Moshiach’s* arrival is imminent, the Rebbe, *Melech HaMoshiach*, has emphasized the primacy of action. We are now beginning to experience the era when we will fully appreciate “the superiority of deed” above scholarship. May this take place completely and immediately!

Editorial Office of
HaMaaseh Hu Halkar Shabbos
 Erev Shabbos Mevarchim Shevat,
 24th of Teves 5771

38. So that all those who study Rambam — both those learning *Mishneh Torah* and those learning *Sefer HaMitzvos* should be united together, the study of *Sefer HaMitzvos* should correspond to the study of *Mishneh Torah*.

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Translated in the memory of

Yitzchok Yosef ben Yaakov Mordechai

OPTION THREE: *SEFER HAMITZVOS*

- If you are not yet able to cover even one chapter a day, then you may follow the daily study of Rambam's *Sefer Hamitzvos*. [For this purpose, Chabad have reprinted *Sefer Hamitzvos*, with the *mitzvos* rearranged to parallel the topics in each day's regular (three-chapters-a-day) cycle.]³⁵

Sefer HaMitzvos

The following paragraphs (and footnotes) were taken from an essay entitled *Unity Through Rambam*, published by *Sichos In English* in 5744 (1984).

- Because one of the principal goals of learning Rambam is to unite all Jews, women³⁶ and children should also participate. Thus, children — both in years or in knowledge — although unable to learn *Mishneh Torah*, should participate by learning a work similar³⁷ to *Mishneh Torah*, also authored by the Rambam — *Sefer HaMitzvos (The Book of Mitzvos)*.

36. The two reasons given above for studying Rambam apply also to the participation of women.

Uniting Jewry: The *mitzvah* to “love your fellow as yourself” devolves upon women as upon men.

2) Torah study: Women are obligated to learn those laws which they need to know (all prohibitory precepts and affirmative precepts not dependent on a set time). [*Admur HaZakein, Laws of Torah Study* 1:14]

Further, because every Jew awaits Mashiach's coming every day, we can posit that included in the laws which women need to know are many of the laws concerning sacrifices. And concerning laws which they do not need to know, women receive reward for learning them [*ibid.*].

37. In his Introduction to *Sefer HaMitzvos*, Rambam writes that it serves as an “opening” and “introduction” to the *Mishneh Torah*. In it Rambam enumerates and briefly explains the six hundred and thirteen *mitzvos* which are explained at length and in detail in *Mishneh Torah*.

Sefer HaMitzvos, unlike *Mishneh Torah*, is not written in Hebrew but in Arabic, the tongue commonly spoken in Rambam's time (it was afterwards translated into Hebrew by R. Moshe Ibn Tibbon). This implies that this work is able to be studied by those who are as yet incapable of understanding Hebrew — those young in years or knowledge.

Hence, those unable to study *Mishneh Torah* should learn its concepts as presented briefly in *Sefer HaMitzvos*.

resolve that must be realized – to the extent that studying *Rambam* is part of our regular routine.³²

REPEATED REVIEW OF LAWS

- The nature of *Mishneh Torah* necessitates repeated review: It is a book of *laws*, and we are expected to have all the laws that must be applied practically at our fingertips at all times.³³

UTILIZE YAHRTZAIT FOR CAMPAIGN

- A most appropriate date to widely and strongly promote the study of three chapters per day, is the twentieth of *Teves* – Rambam's *yahrtzait*.³³

Three Options in the Study of Rambam

OPTION ONE: THREE CHAPTERS PER DAY

- *Mishneh Torah* is the most essential of all the books of Rambam. To date, the practice of studying *Mishneh Torah* daily has gained an extremely wide following.

According to the established custom, three chapters of *Mishneh Torah* are to be studied each day. At this pace, the entire work (fourteen volumes) is completed in just one year.³⁴

*Each and every person should participate in this daily study.*³⁵

OPTION TWO: ONE CHAPTER A DAY

- If you are not yet able to cover three chapters each day, then you may follow a one-chapter-a-day cycle [completing the entire compendium once in every three years].³⁵

32. *Shabbos Parshas Bo* 5749 (*Hisvaaduyos* p. 227).

33. *Motzei Chof Teves* 5750 (*Hisvaaduyos* pp. 148-149).

34. **Completing Rambam – *Simchas Torah***

Completing the entire fourteen volumes of *Mishneh Torah*, penned by Rambam [Rabbeinu Moshe ben Maimon] is comparable to completing the Torah of Moshe ben Amram [Moshe Rabbeinu]; as Rambam states in his Introduction, he entitled his compendium *Mishneh Torah*, because it is effectively “a secondary-repetition (*mishneh*) of the Torah.” (*Leil Chof Teves* 5749; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 68)

35. *Leil Chof Teves*, *ibid*.

Studying Rambam's *Mishneh Torah*

(For the Daily Study Initiative, see below.)

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Rambam's main work, *Mishneh Torah*, stands apart from the entire body of rabbinic literature, unmatched by even the *Mishnah*, *Talmud*, *Midrash*, or *Shulchan Aruch*. While they are indeed extensive, none of these cover the entire, exhaustive body of Torah laws. *Mishnah*, for example, does not record commonplace laws such as *tefillin* and *tzitzis*; *Shulchan Aruch* does not include laws made irrelevant by our nation's exile.

Mishneh Torah is the only compendium to present the fundamental beliefs of Judaism; moral conduct; the complete range of laws applicable during times of exile; as well as the immense body of laws associated with former and future Temple times, such as the sacrifices, Temple duties, agricultural tithes, calendar calculation, ritual purity, and so on. In addition, *Mishneh Torah* contains with the laws pertaining to the future – the laws of *Moshiach* and the Redemption. According to Chabad tradition, even the mystical traditions of the Torah are incorporated in *Mishneh Torah*, Rambam being an unpublicized kabbalist.¹

1. Indications of Rambam as a Kabbalist

Rambam was a kabbalist and the source for many of the laws he sets down in his works are the *Zohar* and other kabbalistic teachings. (*Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 3, p. 768)

Indeed, Rambam alludes to many kabbalistic concepts throughout his works. (*Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 16, p. 473)

Clandestine mystic

[See *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 16, p. 473, based on the Previous Rebbe's *Sefer HaSichos* 5740, pp. 41: According to a tradition from the Ba'al Shem Tov received by the Rebbeim of Chabad, Rambam was indeed a phenomenal master of *Kabbalah*. He was careful not to disclose his mysticism, or even to openly allude

His goal being to present the complete Oral Tradition in an accessible format, Rambam organized *Mishneh Torah* into themed-volumes, topics, chapters and paragraphs with breathtaking efficiency, purposely employing clear and easily understood Mishnaic Hebrew.

LINK LAWS WITH OTHER SUBJECTS STUDIED DAILY

- Every topic in Torah can be found within Rambam's *Mishneh Torah*, a compilation of the laws of the entire body of Oral Tradition. Now that indexes on *Mishneh Torah* have become available, locating these topics has become much easier.

We should therefore associate the topics studied each day with their corresponding laws in *Mishneh Torah*,² finding the connection between *Mishneh Torah* and, for example, the weekly Torah portion.

QUOTE RAMBAM IN YOUR CLASS

- Similarly, as we teach our Torah classes (as per the suggestion that each individual establish and personally teach a new Torah class), it would be appropriate to associate its content at least occasionally with Rambam's teachings –preferably the

to it (e.g., in the manner employed by Rashi on Chumash), due to it being dangerous to reveal kabbalistic concepts at that point in history.

Rambam's secrecy led to many denying that he had any knowledge at all of *Kabbalah*. [The Rebbe presents a list of numerous sources proving Rambam's mystical knowledge – see the footnotes to *Likkutei Sichos*, *ibid.* and vol. 3, p. 768; as well as in *Iggeret Kodesh*, vol. 22, p. 129.]

Otherworldly knowledge

According to the tradition recorded in *Sefer HaSichos* of the Previous Rebbe (*ibid.*), so profound was Rambam's understanding of mystical secrets, that he is said to have had, in kabbalistic/chassidic terminology, "a grasp of *olam haberi'ah*," a knowledge of "*da'as elyon*," and a mode of worship described as "*yechuda ila'ah*."

A proof that Rambam studied *Kabbalah* is the fact that the Responsa of Rabbi Hai Gaon and of Rabbi Sherira Gaon include numerous kabbalistic concepts, and Rambam states in his *Introduction to Mishneh Torah* that he studied "all of the explanations, laws and responsa authored by the Geonim." G-d forbid to suggest that Rambam skipped over these references... (*Shabbos Parshas Acharei-Kedoshim* 5745 – *Hisvaaduyos* p. 1950.) [See at length the Introduction to *Mishneh Torah ha-Shalem* (published by Chazak), ft. 17-20.]

2. *Shabbos Parshas Korach* 5750 (*Hisvaaduyos* p. 387).

ENTIRE TORAH AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

- Once again, we should encourage the study of *three* chapters of *Mishneh Torah* per day – expending immense effort in order to complete the entire compendium in one year. Indeed, this practice, has already gained popularity in numerous communities where the "compilation of the entire Oral Torah" is effectively completed annually.³¹

NOT BINDING, BUT INDESPENSIBLE

- We should accept this study upon ourselves *bli neder*, without making it a binding commitment. At the same time, however, we should approach our study with a most powerful

We should begin the new cycle with such an extremely enhanced quality of study, that despite having just completed the entire work, the material will now appear completely new to us! (*Leil Chof Teves* 5749; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 166)

Matan Torah

Our Sages teach that we should approach the study of Torah each day as if it were brand new material, just delivered to us today; *matan Torah* (Giving of the Torah) is a daily occurrence. If this is true of any Torah study, it is all the more applicable to our completing the entire body of Torah laws, i.e., all the laws of the Oral Torah as they are compiled and organized in *Mishneh Torah*.

For the essence of *matan Torah* was the tangible revelation in earthly realms of most transcendent divinity (*gilui Havayah*). While all Torah study reveals G-dliness in the world, it is specifically its laws (*halachos*) that conduct this highest revelation akin to *matan Torah*. Rambam, in the opening words to his compendium embracing *all* of the Torah's laws, alluded to the spiritual potency of *halachos*: He began, *yesod hayesodos ve'amud hachochmos* – the initial letters of which spell the name *Havayah*. Certainly, then, our beginning the study of *Mishneh Torah* again may be considered *matan Torah*.

Adding layer upon layer

However, now that we have the experience of "learning the entire Torah" behind us (and all the more so if we are the veterans of a good few cycles), our present study takes on an infinitely greater quality. Our current topic of study, *Mishneh Torah*'s opening theme of knowledge of the Creator, "the ultimate foundation and pillar of all wisdom," is greatly enhanced due to our most recent familiarity of its closing theme – "knowledge of G-d filling the earth as the waters cover the ocean." And by the end of this year's cycle, our perception of the closing theme will be far beyond what it is at present... This way, we continue spiraling upwards in ever more profound study, achieving ever greater perception, on and on, forever! (*Shabbos Parshas Va'eira* 5748; *Hisvaaduyos* pp. 249-250)

31. *Shabbos Parshas Vayeishev* 5751 (*Hisvaaduyos* p. 22). See also *Motzei Chof Teves* 5750 (*Hisvaaduyos* pp. 148-149); *Shabbos Parshas Shemos* 5750 (*Hisvaaduyos* p. 161); *Yom Simchas Torah* 5750 (*Hisvaaduyos* p. 234); *Taanis Esther* and *Purim* 5748, fn. 64 (*Hisvaaduyos* p. 405); etc., etc.

partner, and certainly than studying alone.²⁷

- Ideally, our public sessions should follow the three chapters per day cycle.²⁸

TODAY'S FIRST, CATCH UP LATER

- If you join the learning cycle after it has already begun [i.e., partway through the year], you should first study the *current* day's chapters.
- That way, you will be studying the identical laws – with all other participants [across the globe – unity in Torah study being one of the basic goals of this campaign].

Then, over time, you should slowly make up the missed material from the beginning of *Mishneh Torah* – adding only part of the missing material to each day's study, to make it more readily digestible.²⁹

IMPROVE EACH YEAR

- As we begin a new cycle of *Mishneh Torah*, we should add further energy to our studies. The purpose in studying the exact same book of laws all over again is *not* that we have forgotten the material, G-d forbid – but rather, although our standard of study until now may have been first-rate, we wish to improve on our past study of the text, raising the quality of our study to an entirely superior standard.³⁰

27. [For studying “alone,” the Rebbe pointedly employs the expression *bad beavad* – in reference to the following Talmudic teaching (*Berachos 63b*):

Said Rabbi Yose son of Rabbi Chanina, “It is stated (*Yirmiah 50:36*), ‘A sword against the *badim* (sorcerers); let them be shown to be fools (*no’alu*)!’ [Homiletically, this means:] A sword against the Torah scholars who sit and study each one alone – *bad beavad*! Furthermore, by studying alone they grow foolish [mistaken in the studies], for we can associate the term *no’alu* with the verse (*Bamidbar 12:11*), ‘We have acted foolishly (*no’alnu*).’ Further, their foolishness leads them to sin, as the above verse continues, ‘We have acted foolishly and we have sinned!’”]

28. *Shabbos Parshas Bechukosai* 5749 (*Hisvaaduyos* p. 192); and *Shabbos Parshas Ki Sisa* 5749 (*Hisvaaduyos* pp. 370-371).

29. *Shabbos Parshas Vayechi* 5749 (*Hisvaaduyos* p. 157).

30. **Beginning again – from scratch**

current portion in *Mishneh Torah*.

This is especially worthwhile in light of the fact that by associating our regular (and even occasional) studies with the current portion in *Mishneh Torah*, we enhance our understanding of the various topics:

For example, if you are studying *Gemara*, take a look in *Mishneh Torah* to see how Rambam renders the rulings on the same subject; your understanding of that section of *Gemara* will inevitably be clarified and deepened.³

EFFECTIVE TOOL TO BRING GEULAH

- As part of our primary duty nowadays to bring the Final Redemption by conditioning ourselves and those around us to the imminent state of redemption, we should strengthen and increase the widespread study of *Mishneh Torah*.
- This requires participating in the public study cycles, as well as increasing dedication to our personal studies.⁴

3. *Ibid.*, p. 382. See also below, “Contemporary message.”

4. *Shabbos Parshas Shemos* 5752 (*Hisvaaduyos* pp. 106-107).

One study for all brings Redemption

The final Redemption is brought closer and eventually realized through all Jewish communities participating in the daily study cycles of *Rambam*. Such participation is a profound expression of Jewish unity, especially as the *Sefer Hamitzvos* cycle that follows the *Mishneh Torah* cycle day by day makes participation in this universal study readily available to women and children as well – our campaign literally embraces the entire Jewish nation. Such a sustained display of Jewish unity will undo the cause of our exile [i.e., extreme divisiveness between Jews]. Moreover, the nation is uniting specifically to study the laws of the Torah, fulfilling our Sages criteria for Redemption – “The exiles will be ingathered specifically in merit of studying *mishnayos*,” i.e., the systematically detailed laws of the Torah. (*Shabbos Parshas Balak* 5748, fn. 99; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 33)

Studying the future

Prominent among the virtues of studying *Mishneh Torah* is that it enables us to study the entire body of Torah laws; not only those laws that are applicable in the current era, but also the vast body of laws that were relevant during the Temple Eras. Further, Rambam included the laws that will be applicable during the era of the final Redemption. Indeed, in order to prepare for that time, we need to study the details surrounding the *beis hamikdash*; how to build it; how to participate in

- In particular, it requires placing particular focus on the two final chapters of the *Laws of Kings*, at the very conclusion of *Mishneh Torah* [discussing the laws of *Moshiach* and the Final Redemption].⁵

CAMPAIGN FOR THE STUDY OF *MISHNEH TORAH*

- Your personal study should be coupled with an outreach effort to influence as many other men, women and youngsters as possible to participate in the study, in the spirit of our sages' directive: *ha'amidu talmidim harbeh*, "Raise many students" (*Avos* 1:1).
- Set a personal example in this drive that others will see and want to emulate.⁵

donating to the *beis hamikdash*; and so on – laws that are discussed in *Hilchos Beis Habechirah* and the like. (*Motzei Chof Teves* 5750; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 148)

5. Actualizing redemption via study

Rambam concludes his compendium with the *Laws of Kings and Their Wars*, (may it be in a peaceful manner; the entire battle should be *milchemtah shel Torah*, a disputation to clarify Torah matters). The final two chapters of this section concern *Moshiach*. These topics are especially relevant to the present time and we should make sure to study them. (*Shabbos Parshas Shemos* 5752; *Sichos Kodesh* p. 528)

[*Editors note*: On the fifteenth of *Iyar* 5751 (1991), the Rebbe personally distributed a booklet entitled *Devar Malchus* to men, women and children. The booklet included Rambam's laws on *Moshiach* along with four of the Rebbe's insightful *sichos* on these laws, as well as a copy of an aged, original print of Rambam containing a section of laws removed by gentile censors from all subsequent prints.

The distribution came in the wake of the Rebbe's proclamation that the easiest and quickest way to bring *Moshiach* in actuality is to study the subject of *Moshiach* and the Redemption in Torah sources.

See also *The Three Weeks* on www.iChossid.com regarding the Rebbe's strong encouragement of studying Rambam's *Laws of the Holy Temple* and the like.]

CONTEMPORARY MESSAGE

- Since, as Rambam writes, "Most of the Torah's laws are for the purpose of improving character and developing upright conduct,"²⁶ we should also spend time reflecting on the practical lesson in character improvement to be gleaned from at least one part of each day's portion.²⁵

PUBLIC SESSIONS

- We should arrange public session that allow group-study of each day's laws. This is far better than study with a single

study any given topic. We should *actively* seek to uncover such instruction and then improve our conduct accordingly.

The *shiur* of the generation

It was the Alter Rebbe who directed us to "live with the times," meaning to live with the particular topics of Torah study (for the Torah "is our lives and the length of our days") that we are currently studying. First and foremost, the Alter Rebbe's directive applies to our examination of the weekly *parshah*. But it also extends to all other subjects that divine providence has arranged for us to study at present. This directive applies to each individual in their private study, and certainly to topics studied by the general public that follows cycles established by the leader of our generation – a practice that has become commonplace throughout the Jewish scene and that has become a fixed daily study for each and every Jew.

Zeh keili v'anveihi, elokei avi va'aromemenhu

"This is my G-d and I will glorify Him; the G-d of my fathers, and I will exalt him." By following the daily study of *Mishneh Torah* we gain both qualities mentioned in the passage: We accept the study as an intrinsic part of our individual daily Torah obligations ("my G-d"); at the same time, it carries the full weight of a directive issued by the leader of our generation ("G-d of my fathers").

Obvious material for an address

From the above it is clear that when a community Rav or lecturer is to speak before the congregation or at a *farbrengen* and the like, and is searching for appropriate lecture material, then in addition to addressing the topics at hand, he should find something from the daily study cycles; they contain special instructions and lessons for that day. (*Shabbos Parshas Noach* 5749; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 309)

[*Editor's Note*: In the continuation of the above *sichah*, the Rebbe compares the practice of examining the daily chapters of *Mishneh Torah* for a timely message to the practice of *tzaddikim* of randomly opening a *sefer*; or randomly asking young school children (whose purity attracts greater manifestations of divine providence than adults) to quote the verse they studied in *cheder* that day – and in either case, viewing the quoted verse or sentence they encounter as a timely message from heaven relevant to the important matters at hand.]

26. *End of Hil. Temurah.*

[Upon completing a tractate of Talmud, we recite the traditional prayer], “Just as You helped me complete this volume, so may You assist me in completing additional volumes.” In this case, however, you are about to commence the study of the *entire Torah* [as it is condensed into the fourteen volumes of *Mishneh Torah*]! Such an undertaking surely requires divine assistance...²⁴

PARTLY IN-DEPTH

- Granted that the pace of three chapters per day does not allow for an in-depth scrutiny of the laws; however, we should certainly make the effort to study at least *part* of each day’s portion. For example, we can select at least one law each day for in-depth analysis.²⁵

24. *Motzei Chof Teves* 5750 (*Hisvaaduyos* pp. 148-149).

25. *Yom Beis DeChag HaShavuos, Hisvaaduyos Beis, 5750* (*Hisvaaduyos* p. 296). See also *Chag HaShavuos 5749* (*Hisvaaduyos* p. 282).

Without intellectual borders

In recent years, it has become the widespread custom to study a portion of *Mishneh Torah* daily, completing it each year in a manner similar to our annual completion of the Written Torah, that of Moshe ben Amram.

This is accomplished by studying three chapters each day, despite there being too many laws, apparently, for full, in-depth study ... Rambam personally emphasized in his introduction to *Mishneh Torah* that his compendium was being penned “for those of greater and lesser stature,” meaning that it can be studied on a wide scale of scholarship: One of “lesser stature” in scholarship is also able to study three chapters of *Mishneh Torah* daily, by doing so on his own level. A greater scholar, on the other hand, will find it possible to study the same three chapters a day in-depth, along with the many topics that arise from his examination of each chapter ...

Live with the times

As is the case with all Torah topics encountered in our studies, we should “live” with the daily chapters of *Mishneh Torah*. For G-d “gazed into the Torah and then created the universe accordingly,” a reality that is relevant foremost to the “universe in microcosm” that is the human being. “Living” with our current Torah themes causes these matters to be projected into the world at large.

It is customary to seek moral lessons and the like from the daily chapters of *Mishneh Torah* (and other regular Torah studies). Needless to say, this is not a matter of showcasing one’s sharp mind by cleverly associating the chapter’s contents with timely concerns. Rather, it is the truth of the matter and the Torah *expects* us to derive from our studies instruction relevant to the day on which we

The Daily Rambam Initiative

A HISTORY OF THE RAMBAM CAMPAIGN

On the final day of *Pesach* 5744 (1984), the Rebbe launched a drive for the daily study of *Mishneh Torah*. The Rebbe composed a learning schedule (*moreh shi’ur*) that was comprised of 1006 units (the numerical equivalent of the phrase “*mishneh torah*”), including 1000 chapters of laws as well as 6 extra units based on the lengthy introductions and *nuscha’os* (liturgical texts) found in *Mishneh Torah*.

The Rebbe suggested that the study commence on the following Sunday, 27 *Nisan*,⁶ in order to complete the cycle 339 days later, on the anniversary of Rambam’s birth (*Erev Pesach*, 14 *Nisan*).⁷

For those who are not yet able to cover three chapters each day, the Rebbe suggested a one-chapter-a-day cycle.

In its conception, he compared these options to the two customs in reading the Torah³⁴ – completing the public reading cycle in the course of three years, or just a year. Eventually, it became the prevailing custom to complete the weekly Torah reading cycle in one year (by dividing the Torah into 53 Torah portions).⁸ Similarly, the Rebbe greatly emphasized the three-chapter-a-day approach in studying *Mishneh Torah*, facilitating its annual completion.

At every opportunity, the Rebbe passionately promoted the daily Rambam, specifically discussing the current

6. On this day in 1991 the Rebbe Charged the Chasidim with the task to bring now 'do all you can do and bring Moshiach Now'.

7. See the mavuy of the 'Misna Torha Hsolom' for more examples on the openly Hasgch pratis of this Calandar. Also see there that is was also around the 11'th of Nissun, than the rebbe's 83rd Birthday and the rambam has 83 chapters.

8. Rambam, Laws of Prayer 13:1

topic of the three-chapters-a-day cycle.

To further promote this study, the Rebbe instituted *Siyumay HaRambam* – celebratory public completions of the cycle.⁹

The Rebbe also established a parallel study of *Sefer Hamitzvos*¹⁰ for woman and children, matching each day's topics in *Mishneh Torah* with their brief outline in *Sefer Hamitzvos* (see below, at length).

BENEFITS OF JOINING THE DAILY STUDY¹¹

9. See *Siyumei HaRambam* at www.iChossid.com.

10. [Whether an action is Biblical decree, Rabbinic enactment or an universally binding Jewish custom dramatically alters the final law and the various options it contains. For that reason, before Rambam penned his compendium of all the laws, he wished to establish for the public the particular laws that are considered part of the body of the 613 Biblical commandments. He therefore first authored a *Book of Commandments*, listing each command with a brief definition and its Biblical source.]

11. Detractors

Would-be detractors raise a clamor against the practice of studying Rambam daily *en masse*, protesting, “How dare you transform *ah lamdishe sefer*, a classic compendium of serious study into a daily hobby of mass appeal...!”

Rambam responds

Needless to say, these voices deserve no attention: Rambam himself wrote in the very introduction to *Mishneh Torah* that he is specifically penning his compendium “in plain language and concise style, making all of the Torah’s laws readily accessible to both those of lesser and greater stature.” Clearly, Rambam did *not* desire the opposite – that only when some particularly studious fellow desires to generate an impressive *pilpul* his compendium be taken off the shelf for intricate analysis, forcing Rambam’s choice of wording through exhaustive cross-examination...

What about *Shulchan Aruch*?

However, our would-be detractors have conjured up further complaint, equally garbed in self-righteous disguise: Nowadays, practical law is determined by a much later work, the *Shulchan Aruch*; indeed, its author, the *Beis Yosef* [Rabbi Yosef Karo], explains in his Introduction to *Shulchan Aruch* that in determining his *halachic* decisions on each topic, he weighed the opinions of the three great Codifiers of Jewish Law – (a) Rambam; (b) Rosh [Rabbeinu Asher]; and (c) Rif [Rabbeinu Yitzchak Alfasi]. Whenever he faced a disagreement among these three, he generally followed the majority opinion, even if it meant disregarding Rambam’s ruling on the matter. Why then, our detractors demand, are we promoting the study of Rambam’s laws and not those of *Shulchan Aruch*?! Why, someone may come to implement the incorrect law in actual deed...!

DURING THE DAY

- We should study our daily portion of *Rambam* during the day, seeking to complete it before nightfall.

If, for some reason, you were unable to complete it during the day, you should do so during the evening – until midnight, or even until dawn of the following day.²³

CHARITY

- Charity has the ability to elicit Divine assistance, as can be seen in our Sages’ praise for charity before prayer (*Bava Basra* 10a).

23. Preciousness of daytime offerings

This is comparable to the law concerning sacrificial offerings in the *beis hamikdash*; [although there is no sacrificial service during the night, nevertheless, as long as the sacrifices had been slaughtered and their blood brought to the Altar while it was still daylight,] the *kohanim* are permitted to carry limbs and fats of the sacrifices onto the Altar for burning throughout the night hours. For the Biblical command to bring these parts extends all the way until the crack of dawn of the following day; it was only to discourage procrastination that may result in missing the Biblical deadline, that the Sages instituted a midnight deadline. Nevertheless, the *kohanim* must at least *attempt* to offer everything during daylight hours, without resorting to the above clause, because any *mitzvah* that is performed in its designated time is considered more precious (see *Hil. Ma’aseh Hakorbonos*, ch. 4). (*Shabbos Parshas Va’eira* 5749, fn. 39 with its subnote; *Hisvaaduyos* pp. 208-209)

Completing daily studies at night

As we have discussed several times in response to those who ask me about the daily study of *Chitas* that was instituted by the [Previous] Rebbe: that “during the day” includes the following night. (*Leil Hoshanah Rabah* 5749 (*Hisvaaduyos* p. 192)

Chassidishe Mashpi'im

[Editors note: See also *ibid.*, fn. 51, where the Rebbe refers to similar questions in recent times, in which cases the questioners were directed to *chassidishe mashpi'im* (mentors). He then clarifies what the type of *mashpi'ah* to seek:

Those who actively fulfill their duty, for “a *lamdan* (scholar) is not one who *can* study, but one who *does* study,” much as one who *could* steal cannot be termed a thief. We have often stated that it is the responsibility and merit of mentors to be involved in influencing others. Some, however, mistakenly conclude that it is incorrect to disrupt another person (and especially if he is already a *chasid*) from carrying on as he sees fit, or to inspire him to change, out of false concern for the honor of that person, or to avoid causing him any discomfort. The truth is that such “interference” is for that person’s benefit and good, in addition to the benefit of the mentor.]

Hashem, drawing our generation's physical and spiritual sustenance and wellbeing – encourages us to prioritize our daily tasks to devote time for the study of *Mishneh Torah*.

ACTIVE CAMPAIGNING

- We should most strongly promote the study of *Mishneh Torah*, encouraging and campaigning for the most widespread adoption of this practice.²⁰

SPIRITUAL ENERGY AND BLESSING

- *Hakadosh Baruch Hu ozro!* G-d helps by granting immense powers to each Jewish man, woman and child, giving each of us the necessary ability to (a) keep up with the cycle and study *Rambam every day*; (b) fully comprehend the material (using our *chochmah*, *binah* and *da'as*); and (c) experience such success in study that we wholly surpass our own expectations.²¹

G-d further assists by granting peace of mind and fitness and harmony of body and spirit.

Seeing that we have merited heavenly success from this study, we must then invest even greater effort into studying on an even more advanced level.²²

20. *Shabbos Parshas Shemos* 5748 (*Hisvaaduyos* p. 231).

21. *Leil Chof Teves* 5749 (*Hisvaaduyos* p. 166). See also *Shabbos Parshas Vayechi* 5749 (*Hisvaaduyos* p. 161).

22. **Utilizing Heaven's assistance**

This idea is similar to the famous story of the Tzemach Tzedek [see below]. (*Shabbos Parshas Vayechi* 5749; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 161).

When the Tzemach Tzedek was still young, his grandfather the Alter Rebbe once summoned him into his office; there he explained that he desired to gift him with greatly advanced Torah perception. The Tzemach Tzedek declined his grandfather's offer, explaining that he wished to acquire Torah knowledge through his own hard effort and not receive them freely, unearned. Many years later, though, when his already extreme wisdom had infinitely expanded, the Tzemach Tzedek declared that he is bothered that he turned down the offer of the Alter Rebbe. For however great the Torah concepts received gratuitously from the Alter Rebbe may have been, they would have still left room for completely occupying himself in personal toil in Torah study, acquiring on his own even deeper and greater concepts – Torah, after all, is infinite. (*Likutei Sichos*, vol. 15, p. 81)

There are many benefits to the daily study of Rambam, useful and practical, as well as mystical and messianic.¹²

Practically: This is your chance to learn and eventually remember the entire Torah, the detailed laws of *all* 613 commandments. There is a mandatory obligation to know these laws, as clearly stated in the Alter Rebbe's *Laws of Torah Study*, "There is an obligation to fulfill all the laws of all the 613 commandments in thought, speech, and action," the requirement of speech and thought meaning studying and recalling the laws.¹³

Knowing the entire Torah

Like its predecessor, this attack falls flat: The purpose of promoting the study of *Mishneh Torah* is not to enable laymen to issue *halachic* decisions, but rather, in order to practically enable each person to fulfill their duty to study the entire Torah (an obligation clearly spelled out in the *Shulchan Aruch* of the Alter Rebbe, in his *Laws of Torah Study*). While we may be unable to study every dimension of the Torah in its entirety, we may still fulfill this duty by studying at least all of the Torah's laws. Studying all four divisions of *Shulchan Aruch* is clearly insufficient as far as this duty is concerned, for they cover only those of the Torah's laws that remain presently applicable [representing a fraction of the Torah's total laws]. Rambam's *Mishneh Torah*, on the other hand, literally covers the entire body of Torah laws.

Challenging for its own sake

Besides the above counter-arguments, we should not be concerned by the charges against learning *Mishneh Torah*, for those who make them are insincere in their self-righteousness: Were we to turn the tables and ask them how they plan on studying the laws of the entire Torah without joining our daily study of *Mishneh Torah*, they will reverse their overly-studious position, claiming that they have other things to do now... In nice Torah Chassidic terminology, perhaps they are engaged in other "services" like making a *dirah betachtonim*, "a home for G-d in the lower realms" – for which they need to first make themselves lowly... only then will they consider studying learning the entire Torah... (*Shabbos Parshas Bamidbar* 5749; *Hisvaaduyos* pp. 229-230. See also *Tes Zayin Shevat* 5749; *Hisvaaduyos* pp. 280-281.)

12. See above, *Effective Tool to Bring Geulah*, and fn. 5.

13. **Do we need to study the reasons behind the commandments?**

According to the Alter Rebbe, we are obligated to know not only the laws but also the given reasons behind them. Indeed, the Alter Rebbe includes short reasons in his compilation of laws, while Rambam simply cites the plain law. However, that requirement concerns one's ability to issue *halachic* ruling. In order to fulfill our obligation to observe the 613 commandments in thought, speech, and action, even the Alter Rebbe considers it adequate to study only the actual laws.

See *Likutei Sichos*, vol. 36, pp. 16 ff.

[Also, this study was instituted by a great Torah authority, the Leader of our generation, and has been accepted¹⁴ and implemented by thousands of Jews worldwide (in every growing numbers), lends strong Halachic significance.¹⁵]

Mystically: Joining this study cements the enormous, even global unity between all segments of the Jewish people [see footnote].¹⁶ It also encourages us to share a common topic of Torah in our daily discussions and interactions.

READING EVEN WITHOUT PROPER UNDERSTANDING¹⁷

The Previous Rebbe instituted the daily study of *Chitas* (*Chumash*, *Tehillim*, and *Tanya*) as a practice applicable equally to everyone in our times, much as he himself is a leader for every person in our times. The weekly portion of *Chumash* is divided between the seven days of the week; *Tehillim* is divided between the days in the month;

14. See *Mishneh Torah HaShalem*, page 55, for a partial list of contemporary Torah figures who blessed this initiative at the various public *Siyumei HaRambam*.

15. See *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilchos Mamerim*, perek 1, *halachah* 2; and perek 2, *halachah* 2-3.

See *Parshas Lech Lecha*, fn. 2: Note that according to the ruling of Rambam (at the beginning of *Hilchos Mamerim*) a custom that has gained popularity throughout the wider Jewish communities carries the weight of a Biblical command or prohibition.

16. **Torah is the greatest unifier of Jews**

1. Torah study in general serves to unite a Jew with the Supreme Knowledge and Will of G-d in "a wonderful union, like which there is none other."

2. Additionally, Torah unites Jews with one another.

3. Torah is eternal. Hence, the bond forged between Jews through Torah is also eternal.

4. This is enhanced when a number of Jews study the very same subject in Torah.

5. Especially, when this common subject is studied simultaneously.

6. The above-mentioned unity of Jews through Torah can be achieved by learning any topic. However, the ultimate unity is produced by learning something which in itself encompasses the entire Torah. In this way, the subject matter itself is a unifying one.

17. *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 28, p. 286.

and *Tanya* is divided according to the days in the year.

Some mistakenly assume that these study cycles are simply part of our overall obligation to study Torah. If this were the case, then studying the daily portion of *Tanya* would only apply to someone who is sufficiently familiar with the terminology and mystical concepts it contains, since *Tanya* is part of the Oral Law, the study of which requires comprehension to fulfill one's duty.

The truth, however, is that the study of *Chitas* is mainly connected to and for the sake of one's very life and soul – *chayei nafsho*!¹⁸

Just as one recites the daily portion of *Chumash* and *Tehillim* even if he does not understand what he is reading, there is good reason to do the same with the daily *Tanya*.¹⁹

A similarly concept applies to the more recent practice of studying a daily portion of Rambam.

[Editor's Note: It has been pointed out by *chassidim* that the opening word of the Rebbe's inaugural discourse, *Basi LeGani*, allude to the four daily study cycles for which the Rebbe strongly campaigned, in their precise order:

Basi is spelled: *beis*, *alef*, *taf*, *yud*, which are the initials of the opening words of the *Chumash* ("bereishis" – *beis*); *Tehillim* ("ashrei" – *alef*); *Tanya* ("tanya" – *taf*); and *Mishneh Torah* ("yesod" – *yud*).]

Seeing the daily Rambam from this perspective – a channel to our Rebbe, who serves as a life-line to

18. The daily portion of *Tanya*, teachings from the inner dimensions of Torah, more directly affects the life of one's innermost soul, for the inner dimensions of Torah are connected to the inner dimension of the Jew.

19. See *Likkutei Sichos*, *ibid.*, fn. 65, from *Sefer HaSichos* 5705, p. 97: When we speak of observing the daily cycle of *Tanya* each and every day, we do not specifically refer to understanding the topics, but simply reciting and studying the actual letters printed in that day's portion of *Tanya*.