

A GUIDE TO

CHITAS AND RAMBAM

– *What, Why and How* –

חיינו
CHAYENU

A GUIDE TO CHITAS AND RAMBAM
What, Why and How
Second edition - 2017

Published and Copyright © 2017 by Chayenu

All rights reserved. The content, layout, and graphical elements of this book were created or revised in many ways. Tremendous research, effort and resources were invested in creating this work, and no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without prior written permission from the copyright holder.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE	5
----------------------	---

CHITAS

What is Chitas?	8
Daily Study of Chitas.....	11
Timing Options.....	15
Reading vs. Understanding.....	18
Significance of Chitas Study.....	21
Rewards and Benefits of Chitas Study.....	23

RAMBAM

What is Rambam?	28
Daily Study of Rambam	30
Timing Options.....	34
Reading vs. Understanding.....	35
Advantages of Rambam Study	37
Significance of joining the Takanah of (communal) Rambam Study.....	38
Rewards and Benefits of Daily Rambam Study.....	39

PREFACE

.....

If we were to advertise a book that saves lives, heals the sick, and opens heaven's doors to our most fervent prayers, Chitas¹ sales would be brisk indeed. Nor would we be misleading the public. Every Chabadnik has heard of Chitas, the daily study of a portion of Chumash, Tehillim, and Tanya, but only a segment has learned of its history, its power, and its indispensability to life in the twenty-first century.

Each era is born with its own spiritual key, a particular observance or practice that serves more than all others as the gateway through which a generation travels. The Lubavitcher Rebbe unwaveringly insisted that in the modern era, the security and success of individual Jews as well as our collective travels is a daily journey through a brief helping of sacred phrases recorded by Moshe Rabbeinu with their immortal commentary set by Rashi; the praises and pleas of King David; and insights into the soul of a Jew and the soul of the Torah as revealed by the Baal HaTanya. To this, the Rebbe later supplemented a daily serving of Rambam's Mishneh Torah, which details all the laws of the Torah.

With this modest booklet, we seek to educate, inform, and inspire not only Chabad rank and file, but Jews worldwide about the spiritual tool so critical to their spiritual and material wellbeing. Yes, this brief daily study initiative emerged from the holy mouths of the Rebbes of Chabad, but these spiritual giants made it abundantly clear that the daily undertaking is the legacy of all Jews.

Built around eye-opening quotes from the Rebbe, this publication draws on authentic and informative sources to introduce the reader to the study of Chitas and Rambam, explain the manner in which this material is to be studied, and share some of the far-reaching benefits that result from commitment to this initiative.

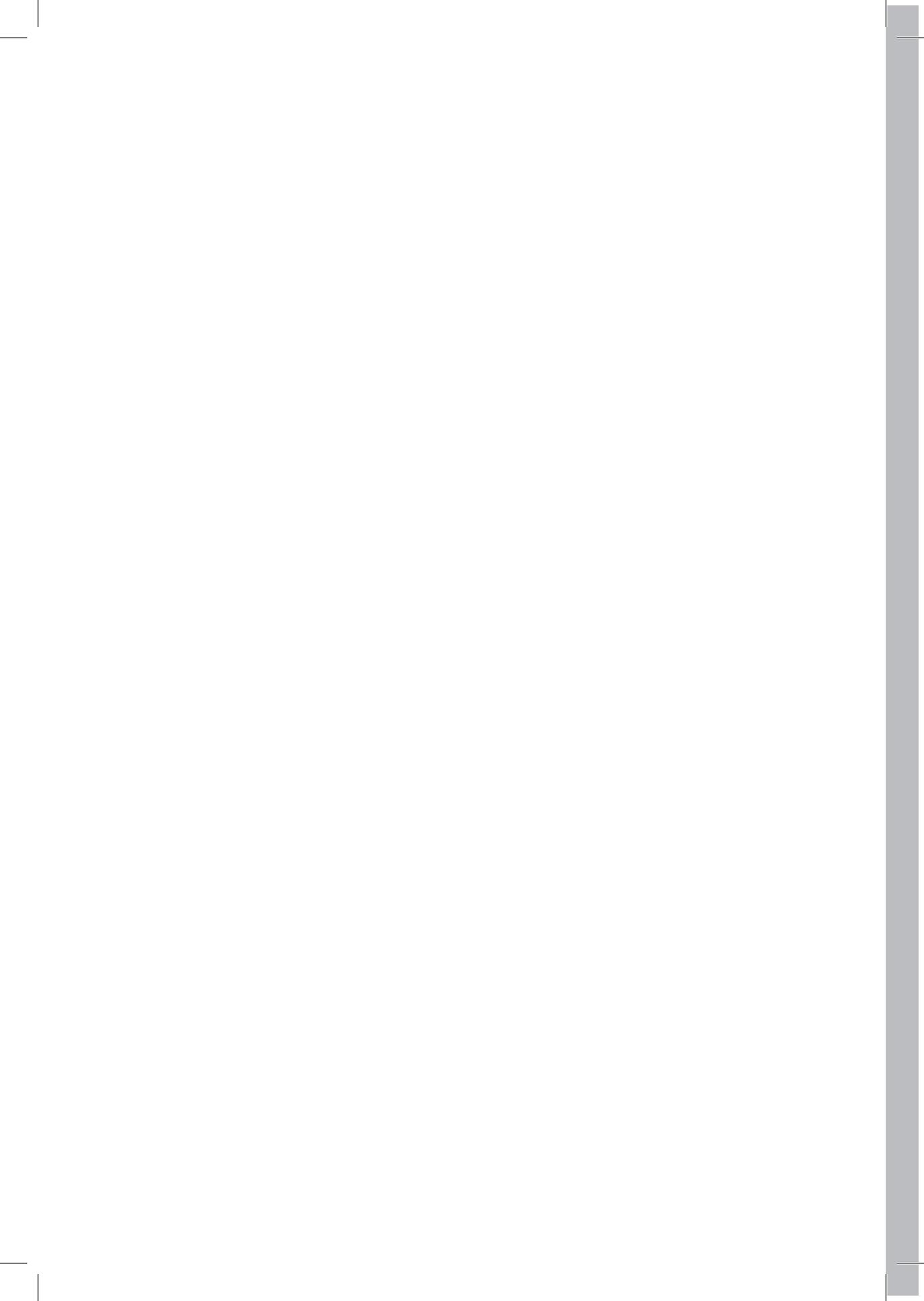
As the material in this publication is just a drop in the bucket of all that was said on the subject, this publication will IYH be updated and published as a more complete edition in the future. If anyone has any comments, suggestions, or material to share in future editions, please email us at editor@chayenu.org.

In this second edition we have added four new sections describing how and when to learn Chitas and Rambam.

With prayers for the immediate and ultimate redemption,

The Chayenu Editorial Team

¹ See page 6, the 3rd explanation of the word "Chitas".



חַת"ת



CHITAS

WHAT IS CHITAS?

Chitas

/khi-tas (Ashkenazic)/ khitat (Sefardic)/

(pronounced *chee-tass*; the “ch” sound is guttural, as in the Yiddish *chutzpah*)

noun

1. a Hebrew acronym formed by the three letters *ches/t* (ח), *tav* (ת), *tav* (ת), the initials of **C**humash (the Five Books of Moses), **T**ehillim (book of Psalms), and **T**anya (the “bible” of Chabad Chassidic thought authored by the first Rebbe of the Chabad movement, Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi.)

To understand the Ashkenazic pronunciation of *Chitas*, despite the “T” of Tanya, see scriptural reference quoted below, entry 4.

2. the daily study cycles of the three books.
3. a single volume entitled *Sefer Chitas* but commonly called “a Chitas,” which contains the Five Books of Moses, Psalms, and Tanya in that precise order. A Chitas often includes a supplemental *Siddur Tehillas/t Hashem* prayer book and *HaYom Yom*, a calendar with daily insights and Chabad customs.
4. **fear** (Heb., literal translation), as in the verse, *va-yehi chitas Elokim al he-arim*, “And the **fear** of Hashem was upon the cities that were around them, so that they did not pursue Yaakov’s sons” (*Bereishis* 32:5).¹

Chumash - חמשה

A Chumash (from *chomesh*, “a fifth”) is the printed form of the Five Books of Moses. The Chumash is further divided into fifty-four sections,² referred to individually as a *parshah* (portion), to be read publicly one *parshah* per week³ as part of the Shabbos service (a practice introduced by Ezra the Scribe),⁴ so that the entire Torah scroll is completed annually.

1 See p. 16 “The Power of Chitas.”

2 Zohar makes mention of 53 sections, and therefore it is commonly said that there are 53 sections. However, when counting them, one easily sees that there are 54 sections. There is a debate as to which portion is omitted from the count, and why it is omitted.

3 In order to complete the Torah each year some portions are combined and read on one Shabbos. Additionally, when a holiday occurs on Shabbos, a reading for the Holiday is read publicly, and the Torah portion that should be read in order is pushed off to the following week.

4 See Tos. S.v. *B'loshon, Berochos* 13a; *Bach*, to *Tur, Orach Chaim* 685.

Jewish law calls for seven men to be summoned successively to the Torah reading each Shabbos, and as a result, each weekly *parshah* is split into seven smaller sections, referred to individually as an *aliyah*⁵ (summons to the Torah reading).

The daily Chumash studied as part of Chitas follows precisely the weekly Torah readings. Starting from the Sunday of each week, the entire *parshah* that will be read publicly on the following Shabbos is studied, in the following manner: On Sunday itself, the first *aliyah* is studied, along with the commentary of Rashi (**Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki**, 11th century), which has long been accepted by all of Jewry as the foremost commentary on the Chumash. On Monday, the second *aliyah* is studied with Rashi, and so on throughout the week, until the seventh and final section of the *parshah* is studied on Shabbos itself.

The entire cycle of public Torah readings – and consequently, the cycle of Chumash studied as part of the daily Chitas – begins anew each year on the festival of Simchas Torah (“Rejoicing over the Torah”), which is celebrated on Tishrei 22 in the Holy Land and on Tishrei 23 in the Diaspora.

When the reading of a particular *parshah* is deferred for a week or two due to a festival coinciding with Shabbos (in which case a special reading relating to the particular festival is read instead of the weekly *parshah*), the daily study of Chitas corresponding to that *parshah* is likewise repeated for a week or two – until that particular *parshah* is read publicly during a Shabbos Torah reading.

***Tehillim* - תהלת**

King David’s 150-chapter biblical book of Tehillim (Psalms) is divided in a number of ways. It is split into five books, which correspond to the Chumash, while it is also divided into seven parts so that it can be completed over the course of a week. An alternative division creates a monthly cycle, in which only a few chapters are read each day and the entire book of Tehillim is completed on the final day of each Jewish month. During months containing twenty-nine instead of thirty days, the thirtieth portion is combined with the twenty-ninth portion.

The daily Tehillim read as part of Chitas follows this monthly cycle, so that it begins anew on the start of each Jewish month.

***Tanya* - תנת**

The Tanya was authored by the first Chabad Rebbe, Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi (1745–1812). It is the main work of Chabad philosophy, the “Written Torah of Chassidism,” in which the fundamental teachings of Chassidism are given systematic intellectual structure, with the

5 Lit., ascent

goal of providing a universal guidebook that each Jew can use to navigate his spiritual path and advance in his personal service of G-d.

Tanya is comprised of 5 distinct parts (*Sefer Shel Beinonim*, “Book of the Average Men”; *Sha’ar ha-Yichud ve’ha’Emunah*, “Gateway of Unity and Belief”; *Igeres ha-Teshuvah*, “Letter of Repentance”; *Igeres ha-Kodesh*, “Sacred Letter”; *Kuntres Acharon*, “Last Thesis”). The sixth Chabad Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn divided Tanya into daily portions, so that it is studied over the course of a year. He prepared an alternative division to fit the thirteen months of a Jewish leap-year. The Tanya portion of the daily Chitas follows these respective divisions for a regular year or for a leap-year.

Either cycle is designed to begin anew annually, on the nineteenth of Kislev. That date marks the liberation of Tanya’s author from incarceration in Czarist Russia on charges related in part to his Chassidic teachings. The exoneration of Rabbi Shnuer Zalman and his Chassidic movement marked a watershed in the evolution of Chassidic teachings, being viewed as Heaven’s signal to begin disseminating the teachings in abundance and in a manner that would inspire the Jewish masses. The nineteenth of Kislev is celebrated annually as the “Rosh Hashanah of Chassidism.”

Did You Know?!

There are three general ways of dividing time into days: 1) days of the week, 2) days of the month, 3) days of the year.

The study of Chitas on a daily basis combines all these elements of time: The Chumash is divided according to the **days of the week**. The Tehillim is divided according to the **days of the month**. And the Tanya is divided according to the **days of the year**.

Additionally, it is explained in Kabbalah that a ‘day’ represents the Divine Attribute of Binah (understanding), a ‘week’ represents Ze’er Anpin (the primary six emotional attributes), ‘month’ and ‘year’ represent the attribute of Malchus (Sovereignty), thus, through a daily study of Chitas one is also combining the divine structure through which G-d created the world.

(Based on a talk delivered by the Lubavitcher Rebbe on Shabbas Parshas Bereishis 5741, cited in Rabbi Zev Dov Slonim’s compilation on the study of Chitas)

DAILY STUDY OF CHITAS

3 Books in 3 Stages

It can be said that the development of Chitas is as long as the history of Chabad itself, stretching from its first Rebbe, the Ba'al HaTanya (1745-1812), all the way to its seventh leader – our Rebbe.

Not long after Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi published his book of Tanya, did his followers adopt the practice of studying one of its illuminative chapters each week, and many Chassidim studied a chapter a day, as a means of readying themselves for sincere service of the heart – the legendary contemplative morning prayers for which Chassidim are famed.

In his wonderfully descriptive style, the sixth Chabad Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn (1880-1950), portrays the centuries-old commitment to studying a daily portion of Tanya and the spiritual rewards it conveys:

The book of Tanya is the Written Torah of Chassidic thought ... The early Chassidim would read from it every week, every day of the week, one chapter, as if they were reading a portion of the Torah ... The book of Tanya removes all spiritual calamities, removes all challenges and concealments; it transforms a curse into a blessing. With it the Jews will greet Moshiach. A chapter of Tanya brings an abundance of blessings and success.

Igros Kodesh Rayatz, vol. 4, p. 269

Nevertheless, this practice did not involve a specific division or study cycle of Tanya for the purpose of daily study. Most critically, this was an informal custom of Chassidim, not the formal enactment of a Rebbe.

Stage One: Chumash

By contrast, the concept of studying the daily portion of Chumash – in tandem with the Torah reading of each Shabbos – along with its corresponding commentary of Rashi, was indeed introduced to Chabad Chasidim by the Ba'al HaTanya (the “Alter Rebbe”) himself:

Chabad Chassidim have a tradition that was passed down the generations and was originally instituted by the Alter Rebbe, to study a daily portion of the weekly sedra (Torah portion) of Chumash with Rashi. This was also done by the [Chabad] Rebbes.

HaYom Yom, entry for Teves 19

In 1890, the fifth Chabad Rebbe, Rabbi Shalom DovBer Schneersohn, explained that the intention of the Ba'al HaTanya in introducing a daily Chumash-and-Rashi study was far more than a dry intellectual exercise:

In the early years of his leadership, the Alter Rebbe declared publicly, "One must live with the times." From his brother, Rabbi Yehudah Leib, the elder Chassidim learned that the Rebbe meant that one must live with the sedra (Torah portion) of the week and the particular portion of the day. One should not merely study the weekly portion each day, but live with it.

HaYom Yom, entry for Cheshvan 2

Thus the daily Chumash study – the first of the three study cycles contained in Chitas – was established by the founder of Chabad Chassidism soon after the birth of the movement.

Stage Two: Tehillim

It was not until approximately a century and a half later that the second stage of Chitas was born. That occurred in the midst of a perilous period for Chabad and indeed, for much of Jewry. The Soviet establishment launched an oppressive campaign in all the territories under its vast dominion with the design of suffocating every last vestige of the Jewish soul – Torah education, belief in G-d, and the practical observance of the *mitzvos*. Despite the far reach of their secret police and the sheer terror of their ruthless methods, the Communists discovered that a lone citizen was successful in consistently and methodically unwinding their evil designs on a massive scale.

That man was Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Schneersohn, who formed and personally directed a breathtaking labyrinth of underground Torah schools, synagogues, mikvehs, and the like. He sent overt and covert emissaries, teachers and instructors who were willing to risk their lives to keep the flame of Torah and *mitzvos* alight in every region of the USSR. He also founded branches of his Torah schools outside the USSR, in Poland, Uzbekistan and in America.

Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok was hounded mercilessly by the Soviets, but he ignored their intimidation. In 5687 (1926), however, he sensed that the enemy was poised to strike a deadly blow. In response, he requested that the book of Tehillim as it is divided into daily portions to be completed in the course of a month, be recited in all synagogues.

Listen, Chassidim, and all Jews who await the coming of Moshiach! Repeat in my name to all Chassidim in the world that I have instructed them to recite a portion of Tehillim as divided by the days of the month in all Chassidic synagogues after morning prayers each day, including Shabbos.

Excerpt of 1927 handwritten directive discovered on his desk on the day of his arrest⁶

6 Cited in *Sefer Haminhagim* p. 20.

Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok was arrested and suffered a brutal incarceration. The Soviets swiftly sentenced the Rebbe to death – a decree that was miraculously reversed, with the help of enormous international outcry. So complete was the reversal that the Soviets were subsequently compelled to escort Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok with his family and his possessions out of the USSR's iron borders to freedom.

An account by the Rebbe's close confidant and devoted follower, Rabbi Eliyahu Chaim Althaus, immortalizes Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok's reflection on the effectiveness of reciting the daily Tehillim:

These were his exact words: "Before 5687 (1927) I was greatly afraid. I did not speculate what my own fate would be, for I never imagined what I would have to endure. Rather, my fear was for the Chassidim. Before I instructed them to begin saying Tehillim, it was really difficult for me."

Excerpt of a letter from Rabbi Althaus to his fellow Chassidim⁷

After the Rebbe's release from prison, this instruction to recite Tehillim was not reversed. In fact, the Rebbe directed that it be spread to all Jewry to their lasting benefit and protection.

Stage Three: Tanya

Sixteen years and another continent later, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok – then living in New York – completed the arduous task of apportioning the Tanya so that it could be studied in an annual cycle. This occurred in 1943, just seven years prior to his passing⁸ and the transfer of leadership to his son-in-law, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson – the seventh Chabad Rebbe.

This division of Tanya was undertaken in concert with a unique project with which Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok charged his son-in-law: the creation of a booklet entitled *HaYom Yom* - a spiritual calendar for Chabad Chassidim that would record various Chabad customs, teachings, and anecdotes – one per day.

Most critically, the calendar created by the seventh Chabad Rebbe would introduce the Chassidim to a newly-minted enactment – the institution of the daily Chitas:

You should specifically include a set schedule of daily study that is appropriate for every person – in addition to the Torah study that each person pursues according to their individual ability –

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Toras Menachem* Vol. 2, p. 74. [

that includes: 1. Chumash with Rashi's explanation. 2. Tehillim, after morning prayers, as it is divided according to the days of the month. 3. A lesson in Tanya, as I have divided it according to the days of the year.

Igros Kodesh Rayatz, vol. 7 p. 30

Accordingly, the *HaYom Yom* calendar begins each day's entry by listing the precise portions of Chumash, Tehillim, and Tanya to be recited and studied that day.

Chitas was not simply a suggestion. It was a *takanah* – an enactment of a Rebbe.⁹ Indeed, the Rebbe referred to Chitas as such repeatedly throughout his many decades of voluminous correspondence with individuals and communities around the globe and across the colorful spectrum of Jewish affiliation and observance. He called upon Jews everywhere to take up the study from which they would benefit tremendously in spirit and in the concrete needs of their material lives.¹⁰

Did You Know?!

BLI NEDER

“I was gratified to read that you observe the well-known three [daily] study schedules of Chumash, Tehillim, and Tanya that are equally applicable to all. It is self-understood that this practice should be undertaken bli neder [as a non-binding commitment]. That way, if on occasion, one is forced by circumstance to miss part of this study he will not have broken a binding intention. In such cases, you should certainly compensate for the missed portions during the subsequent days.”

Igros Kodesh, vol. 8, p. 200

9 See *Toras Menachem* 5746 vol. 4 p. 143; *Sefer Hasichos* 5749 vol. 2 p. 412.

10 The Rebbe would typically refer to Chitas as “The well-known three [daily] study schedules of Chumash, Tehillim and Tanya, as per the enactment of my esteemed father-in-law the (Previous) Rebbe, which is appropriate for everyone.” Occasionally, there were minor variants to this phrase.

TIMING OPTIONS

On Schedule

One may study the various sections of Chitas in whichever order he prefers.¹¹ However, it is important to study all sections on the scheduled day:

*The daily portion of Chumash with Rashi, and similarly, the portions of Tehillim and Tanya, should be studied on the appropriate day and not pushed off to the following day, for the lesson of each day is strongly associated with that specific day.*¹²

Likkutei Sichos, vol. 8, p. 199 13

The Rebbe constantly echoed a tradition received from the Alter Rebbe (Ba'al HaTanya) that we should “live with the times” in a spiritual sense, extracting practical lessons from the daily portion of Chumash and Rashi and viewing them as sent by divine providence to guide and inspire our personal service of G-d at the present time. In his many addresses and letters, the Rebbe frequently extracted such lessons as timely guidance for individuals or Jewry as a whole. He also extended this directive to the other sections of Chitas.

A Morning Routine

The most appropriate time of day to study Chitas is in proximity to *shacharis*, the morning service:

*“Regarding the study of Chumash with Rashi ... it is self-understood that it is preferable [to study it] in close proximity to the morning service – and even better, in immediate proximity.”*¹⁴

*“Tehillim, after morning prayers.”*¹⁵

*“It is self-understood that it is preferable to study the daily lesson of Tanya in close proximity to the morning service – and even better in immediate proximity.”*¹⁶

11 “I have never heard of an emphasis on studying the Chumash, Tehillim, and Tanya in a specific order” – The Rebbe (*Igros Kodesh*, vol. 4, p. 283).

12 The Rebbe cites a number of specific examples of the correlation between the daily study and a specific day. See *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 8, p. 200, fn. 35. See also *Toras Menachem*, vol. 2, p. 74.

13 See also *Sefer HaSichos* 5749, p. 194, fn. 39.

14 *Igros Kodesh*, vol. 17, p. 146.

15 Introduction to *HaYom Yom*. See also *Igros Kodesh*, vol 17, *ibid*.

[Strikingly, on almost every occasion the Rebbe had reason to discuss the daily Tehillim (as part of the daily Chitas) the Rebbe re-emphasized that is to be observed “following the morning prayers.”]

16 *Igros Kodesh*, vol. 17, *ibid*.

Ironically, although the acronym “Chitas” was coined with traditional deference to the chronological order of its contents – Chumash, followed by Tehillim and then Tanya – many study these portions in precisely the reverse, but more practical, sequence:

The Tanya section is commonly studied first, in preparation for the morning service, in keeping with the widely observed practice of studying Chassidic teachings for the sake of reflecting on G-d’s greatness, and the like, before approaching G-d in prayer each morning.

Even more common is the practice of recite the daily Tehillim immediately following the morning prayers, as the concluding segment of that service. It is recited by the entire congregation and then followed by the mourner’s *kaddish*. This is in keeping with an enactment of Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak of Lubavitch, intending for all Jewry, to hasten and ease the process of Moshiach’s arrival.¹⁷

Finally, our Sages recommended studying Torah immediately after praying in the morning. It is therefore common to study the daily Chumash portion at that time.

Nevertheless, these practices are non-official, and Chitas can be studied in any sequence.

When Mornings Are Not an Option

It may not always be possible to study Chitas in the morning. In that case, anytime in the day will work just fine. Moreover, the study can be split into segments to match one’s personal schedule.

This conclusion is borne out of replies offered by the Rebbe to inquiries regarding the timing of Chitas:

“On short winter days, you are occupied with your job and you doubt that you will have sufficient time to complete the allotted portions of Chumash ... [during the day]. You wonder whether you should study it at night. Well, regarding Chumash ... you needn’t study it all at once. Rather, you can split the daily portion into [smaller] sections and learn it throughout the course of the day. Understandably, this can be done at your place of business.”¹⁸

“It is best to recite [the daily] Tehillim immediately after the morning service. However, if [doing so] will disturb the morning seder ha-yeshivah [strict Yeshivah study schedule], the Tehillim should be recited during breaks [later in the day, provided it is completed] before sunset. In any case, you should recite at least one chapter immediately following the morning service, so that there will be some form of recital of Tehillim immediately after praying.”¹⁹

¹⁷ See above, p. 12.

¹⁸ *Igros Kodesh*, vol. 18, p. 31.

¹⁹ From a *yechidus* (private audience with the Rebbe), as recorded in *A Chassidisher Derher*, Issue 36 (113).

When Days Run Into Nights

Despite the importance of studying Chitas on its scheduled day, life pressures or even plain forgetfulness may cause one to realize too late that he neglected his daily portions. When that happens, the Rebbe instructed, “He can and must complete it at night.”²⁰ Actually, the Rebbe quotes this as an explicit directive of the initiator of the daily Chitas, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak of Lubavitch:

*“It is possible to make up for missed portions of the previous day’s Chitas during the night [that immediately follows].”*²¹

Like many matters of *halachah*, it appears that it is preferable – though not essential – to compensate for whatever was missed during the day in the first half of the night, before the halachic hour of midnight.²² Thus, the Rebbe calls for compensating the study “until midnight, or even until the crack of dawn.”²³

Failing that, one should compensate for a missed day of Chitas at the earliest opportunity during the same week – the next day,²⁴ “during the subsequent days,”²⁵ or “the remainder of that week.”²⁶

It would seem appropriate to avoid reciting the daily Tehillim during the first half of the night.²⁷ This concern does not apply to Chumash.²⁸

20 *Sefer HaSichos* 5749, p. 194, fn. 39. See also *Igros Kodesh*, vol. 9, p. 244: “You asked about the daily study of a portion of Chumash together with the commentary of Rashi. Well, it is understood that each day’s portion is meant to be studied during the actual day. It is also understood that when this is impossible, the portion should be compensated for on the night following that missed day or also during the remainder of that week.”

21 *Igros Kodesh*, vol. 5, p. 304.

22 The halachic hour of midnight is adjusted daily according to the length of nocturnal hours of any given night.

23 *Sefer HaSichos*, *ibid.*

24 See *Igros Kodesh*, vol. 13, p. 330.

25 *Igros Kodesh*, vol. 8, p. 200.

26 *Igros Kodesh*, vol. 9, p. 244.

27 “It is well known that Tehillim (including the above-mentioned daily portion) is not to be recited at night, from the appearance of stars until after midnight. However, one can study Chumash and Tanya” (*Sefer Haminhagim* p. 20).

An individual once wrote to the Rebbe, suggesting that Chitas be studied during the night following Tisha B’av, and not on the afternoon of Tisha B’av itself (as is indeed the Chabad custom). In his response, the Rebbe dismissed this suggestion. In one of his points, he touched upon the recital of Tehillim: “It is also worth taking note of the well-known statement of the Arizal that one should not read Chumash at night. Similarly, we are careful to avoid reciting Tehillim at night, until after midnight.”

28 “Regarding studying the daily Chumash ... you needn’t study it all at once. Rather, you can split the daily portion into [smaller] sections and learn it throughout the course of the day. Understandably, this can be done at your place of business. If you lack the time even for such an arrangement, you should then study the Chumash with commentary on each verse. Under pressing circumstances, Chumash with the addition of commentary can be considered studying the Oral Torah [which is permitted, indeed encouraged, at night. This is] particularly [acceptable] in our times, when many are lenient regarding [the Arizal’s statement against] studying the Written Torah at night.”

Study Missed Portions First

One who is faced with the obligation of studying the daily portion as well as the portion he failed to study on the previous day, should take heed of the following directive:

*“When compensating for missed portions of Chitas, it is obvious that yesterday’s [missed] portion should be studied first, for it is appropriate to maintain the correct order and to avoid studying Chapter Two before Chapter One.”*²⁹

READING VS. UNDERSTANDING

Verbalization

In order to be considered studying any part of Torah, its words must be verbalized. Only in the case that this is medically impossible or extremely challenging can its words be recited mentally, as per the Rebbe’s suggestion to a patient who was proscribed from reciting texts, “... then perhaps – with the doctors’ consent – he can recite them mentally.”³⁰

A Telling Story

Reb Sholom Deitsch entered the Rebbe’s room for Yechidus, and the Rebbe asked him if he is particular about his study of Chitas. Reb Sholom responded that he studies the daily Chumash and recites the daily Tehillim; Tanya, however, he doesn’t understand. To which the Rebbe suggested that he buy a Tanya with a (Yiddish) translation so that he will understand the Tanya better.

Vayehi Ish Matzliach (the life of Reb Zalman Yuda Deitsch), p. 37

²⁹ *Igros Kodesh*, vol. 13, p. 330.

³⁰ *Igros Kodesh*, vol. 6, p. 341.

Comprehension

Verbalization does not necessarily include comprehension, in which there is a distinction between the Written Torah (the twenty-four books of *Tanach*) and the Oral Torah (the Mishna, Talmud, and works of the Rabbis across history). One who reads the books of *Tanach* without understanding their contents has nevertheless fulfilled his obligation to study Torah. This is certainly not the case with Rabbinical works, for which comprehension is essential to its study.

Comprehending Chitas

Chitas contains segments from both *Tanach* and Rabbinical writings:

Chumash: Although Chumash on its own may be read without understanding, this daily portion should be studied and understood, especially its accompanying commentary of Rashi that belongs to the Oral Torah.

Tehillim: It is not necessary for one to understand the words of Tehillim in order to recite them.

Tanya: This daily portion presents a particular challenge. It belongs entirely to the Oral Torah that must be comprehended if it to be considered studying at all. At the same time, many find it too profound or its terminology too unfamiliar or esoteric to comprehend on their own.

For the sake of studying the daily Chitas, “It is not necessary that it should be understood profoundly, but rather that one should simply read and study the text [on a most basic level].”³¹

Reading Tanya Even Without Understanding

It is entirely possible that even a basic understanding of the daily Tanya may prove challenging. In the following excerpt, the Rebbe addresses this concern and offers surprising insight into the nature of the daily Chitas:

“Concerning Tanya, which a part of the Oral Torah, one might suggest that if he does not comprehend what he is reading, he is not considered studying at all – unlike the Written Torah, regarding which he fulfils the mitzvah of Torah Study even if he reads without understanding

31 Footnote to *Sefer HaMinhagim*, *ibid.* “In addition, one should extract a concept from each day’s portion of Tanya that he could contemplate throughout the day” (*ibid.*).

the basic meaning of the words. Consequently, one may suggest that the study of Tanya is irrelevant to the uninitiated who cannot comprehend its text.

“In truth, the study of daily Chitas – including Tanya – was established by the Leader of the Generation, who introduced it with the intention of including every person living in our generation.³² Indeed, he emphasized that these daily studies are suitable for each individual, including people with limited understanding and those who cannot comprehend the words they are reading.”

“The reason for this inclusiveness is that the daily study of Chitas is not studied simply in order to fulfill each person’s personal obligation to study Torah. If that was the entire purpose of Chitas, then indeed, he who does not comprehend, has not fulfilled his obligation. Rather, Chitas has another purpose. It is a daily study design to positively influence the soul – even touching the very core of the soul! – of each Jewish individual living in our times without exception.

“In this, Chitas is similar to the custom [introduced by the Baal Shem Tov] whereby one recites [daily] the chapter of Tehilim that corresponds to his current age [for his personal benefit]. It is not important to comprehend the words of the psalm. He must merely verbalize its words [in order to achieve the intended benefit].

“This is also a response to those who refrain from studying Tanya, offering a holy-sounding excuse³³ that their [righteous] ancestors did not study Tanya, or that they are not on a sufficiently exalted spiritual level to study Tanya, or that they do not wish to fool themselves into imagining that they will understand the words of [Tanya’s author,] the Alter Rebbe. They go so far as to claim that not only would they be lying to themselves if they imagined they understood Tanya, but they also wish to defend the honor and reverence of the Alter Rebbe, by acknowledging that the Tanya has a depth that one cannot fathom.

“The answer [to these ostensibly righteous excuses] is this: You were born and are living in this present generation and all your excuses cannot altar this plain fact. Therefore, as a member of this present generation, you are associated with the Tanya and you need to study it, especially now that the Leader of the Generation has established a daily study of Tanya to be observed throughout the year, and has made this study pertinent to each and every individual person.”

Toras Menachem 5746, vol. 4, p. 143 (Matos-Maasei)

32 [Ed. Note: A generation in this context is defined by its spiritual leader, not by biological years. For example, all who lived during the era of Moshe Rabbeinu belonged to the Generation of Moshe.]

33 Orig. Yiddish: *m'tut zich ahn ah zaidene tzupitze*.

SIGNIFICANCE OF CHITAS STUDY

“Connecting” to the Rebbe

You surely have fixed times to study the teachings of my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe... including the study sessions that are universally applicable on a day-to-day basis; i.e., Chumash, with Rashi’s commentary; Tehillim as it is divided according to a monthly schedule; and Tanya, as it was divided according to an annual schedule by my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe; for these are all mediums through which we can bond with our *Nasi*, my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe, הַכֹּהֵן.³⁴

Moshiach’s Question

When Moshiach comes, he won’t understand excuses (*kuntzin*). He will demand a factual statement: List for me on a piece of paper — how many Jews have you transformed into Chassidim of the Rebbe? How many Yidden did you influence to study (the *shiurim* of) Chitas?³⁵

The soul calls

The daily studies as they were arranged for daily [learning] — the chapters of Tehillim, Chumash with Rashi, and the lesson in Tanya — vitally concern the soul (*Noigeia... In Nefesh*) of every single person.³⁶

34 Igros Kodesh vol. 3, letter 708

35 Shabbas Parshas Pekudei 5727.

36 *Kovetz Lubavitch*, vol. 7. p.24

A Telling Story

THE POWER OF CHITAS

It was in the beginning of the year 5617 (1856), that my great grandfather, the Tzemach Tzedek, sent his son my grandfather, the future Rebbe Maharash, on a mission to Petersburg to handle affairs that would benefit the greater public.

Just before the Rebbe Maharash left for his journey, the Tzemach Tzedek related to him: In the year 5603 (1843), when I was summoned to participate in a rabbinical conference that was to take place in Petersburg, I visited the gravesite of my righteous mother (Rebbetzin Devorah Leah) in Liozna. She told me (in a vision) that because of her self-sacrifice on behalf of the Chassidim and (the continuation of) *Chassidus* she merited to enter the (heavenly) chamber of the Baal Shem Tov in order to invoke mercy for my success.

She asked the Baal Shem Tov to provide her with some *segulah* (spiritual remedy) for me, that I will be able to stand firm, with G-d's help, against those who oppose the ways of Chassidus. And the Baal Shem Tov answered: "Your son is after all erudite in the Five Books of the Torah (Chumash), in Psalms (Tehillim) and in Tanya; knowing every single letter by heart. And the verse says, 'And the terror of G-d was [upon the cities]....' The Hebrew word for 'terror' is "**Chitas**" (ches, tov, sov), which is an acronym for Chumash, Tehillim, Tanya. And one who is erudite in their letters eradicates all challenges and concealments."

Wherever you will be – the Tzemach Tzedek continued his instruction to the Rebbe Maharash – whether in government offices or visiting government ministers, you should recite a *parshah* of Chumash, a chapter of Tehillim and a chapter of Tanya.

The Rebbe Maharash told his son, my father the Rebbe Rashab: "How do you imagine it worked out? It was a precious recipe! Through the first three *parshiyos* of Chumash, three chapters of Psalms and three chapters of Tanya, all the proposals of the Maskilim ('enlightened' secular Jews) were shattered. And the Children of Israel, together with their holy Torah, emerged victorious, while the chief of the Maskilim fled the country out of shame and fear, for he has caused the government major monetary loss due to the books the government has paid to be printed (and would now not be used)."

My father [the Rebbe Rashab] told me: "Great are (advice of) Tzaddikim. During the fifty years from 5617 till now, a chapter of Tanya not only shatters the challenges and concealments, but it also reveals the highest Divine revelations, by revealing the realm that is an 'essential concealment' of G-d (*He'elem Ha'atzmi*), into spiritual and physical blessings."

Kitzurim V'Heoros L'Sefer Likutei Amarim p. 127

REWARDS AND BENEFITS OF CHITAS STUDY

Channel for all Blessings

It is simple and self-understood that in order to receive and contain blessings from G-d — Who gladly dispenses blessings from the fullness of His hand — a person must make appropriate large vessels [which would contain these blessings], and therefore you will surely do the same, namely, that you should fulfill all the directives that you have received from my father-in-law [the Previous Rebbe] – if you received any directives; and likewise you should try to fulfill the three [daily] study schedules that are applicable to all, which my father-in-law enacted: 1) To recite [chapters of] Tehillim (as apportioned for the days of the month) every day after morning prayer; 2) To study a daily portion of the current week's Torah portion together with the commentary of Rashi; 3) To study daily the Tanya, as apportioned for the days of the year.³⁷

Source of blessing for a great many matters

I would like to use this opportunity to encourage you to observe the three well-known study schedules of Chumash, Tehillim, and Tanya, which my esteemed father-in-law the Rebbe told us about on numerous occasions. These schedules apply equally to all, and they are a *segulah* [spiritual remedy] for a great many matters.³⁸

Livelihood

It is astonishing that your entire letter fails to mention a word about that which forms the channels of livelihood for each Chassid and especially for each *tamim* (pupil in the Chabad Yeshivah system), namely, a fixed schedule for the study of Chassidus (together with friends, if possible, but at the very least on your own). Naturally, this comes in addition to observing the study schedules that apply to everyone equally, namely, the daily Tehillim, Chumash with the commentary of Rashi, and Tanya – which my esteemed father-in-law the Rebbe introduced for all who are connected to him and for all who are associated with him.³⁹

³⁷ *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 21, Letter 7903.

³⁸ *Igros Kodesh*, Letter 6036.

³⁹ *Igros Kodesh*, Letter 1058.

Physical Healing

... you requested a blessing for healing from an eye disease, and for your wife.

When I will be at the resting place of my esteemed father-in-law the Rebbe, I will mention both of you for healing. I hope that you will be able to report good news to me in this matter.

Each Jew must fashion vessels in which to receive G-d's blessings. Therefore, if you have not done so until now, you should now begin reciting Tehillim each day – the portion of Tehillim that was allocated for each particular day of the month, so that the entire Tehillim is completed during the course of a month – and also studying the daily portion of Chumash, so that the *sedra* is completed during the course of a week.⁴⁰

Sleep Disorder and Anxieties

I received your letter... in which you ask for a blessing concerning your difficulty falling asleep and your anxieties, and you ask me for a suggestion.

In my opinion, you must totally cease from thinking about this... and you should resolve to commit, without a binding promise, to fulfill the directive of my father-in-law to say Tehillim daily after morning prayer, as apportioned for the days of the month... and also see that not a day goes by that you do not learn at least some verses from the week's Torah portion.⁴¹

Faith

Concerning that which you write about simple faith.

It is explained in *seforim* (Holy Torah books) that [simple faith] is found, in complete form, by every single Jew – and every Jew is called a son of Avraham, Yitzchok and Yaakov, or a daughter of Sarah, Rivkah, Rachel and Leah – it is only that the evil inclination sometimes bombards the mind and tries to mislead a person into thinking otherwise, and sometimes the opposite...

And to combat this... observe the well-known three [daily] study schedules of Chumash, Tehillim and Tanya.⁴²

40 *Igros Kodesh*, vol. 4, Letter 1012.

41 *Igros Kodesh*, vol. 21, Letter 7928

42 *Igros Kodesh* vol. 20, Letter 7513

Children

In general, I see no reason for worry, and may G-d bless you with healthy children ... And you should strengthen yourself in the three daily study schedules, which is appropriate for everyone, of Chumash, Tehillim and Tanya, as per the enactment of my esteemed father-in-law the Rebbe, as is known. Understandably, this should all be done without a binding promise.⁴³

Shidduch

I received your letter, dated 8 Adar, in which you write concerning finding a *shidduch* (soul mate), and you write that in a natural manner it is not possible (for you to find one) ... Since everything has to have a natural way (of accomplishment), you should accept upon yourself – without a binding promise – to give every day before morning prayer a franc to charity, and it is self-understood that you need to observe every day the three well-known study schedules of my father-in-law, the Previous Rebbe.⁴⁴

Did You Know?!

The Rebbe requested - and said that it would make him happy (*Ich vel zein tzufrieden*) - that he be notified if Chitas is being observed.

Igros Kodesh vol. 3, letter 727

On other occasions the Rebbe wrote: I had great pleasure (*Neheneisy*) from what you wrote (to me) that you observe the study of Chitas.

Igros Kodesh vol. 8, letters 2442, 2444

⁴³ *Igros Kodesh* vol. 6, Letter 1772

⁴⁴ *Igros Kodesh* vol. 7, Letter 2051



רמב"ם



RAMBAM

WHAT IS RAMBAM?

Rambam

noun

1. Maimonides, Jewish sage (1135-1204). Rambam is a Hebrew acronym of **R**abbeinu **M**oshe **B**en **M**aimon, “Our Teacher, Moses son of Maimon.” (His Greek title, Moses Maimonides, likewise means, “Moshe the son of Maimon.”) It is common practice to refer to Jewish sages by their Hebrew acronyms, hence the sage is known in written and spoken word as “the Rambam,” or simply “Rambam.”
2. A reference to the fourteen-volume comprehensive code of Jewish law penned by Maimonides in a concise Mishnaic Hebrew, accurately entitled *Mishneh Torah* and also referred to as *Sefer Yad ha-Chazakah*. It is common practice to refer to the primary work of a Jewish sage with the same name by which the sage is known.
3. Specific portions of *Mishneh Torah* (see entry 2), apportioned for daily study according to either of two study cycles encouraged by the seventh Lubavitcher Rebbe. One who observes these study cycles is referred to informally (especially within Chabad circles) as “studying Rambam.”

Who is Rambam?

Rambam was one of the most outstanding sages in Jewish history. Born in Cordova, present-day Spain, in 1135, he passed away in Egypt in 1204 and is buried in the Holy Land, in the city of Teveria. In addition to serving as one of the most important and influential authorities on Jewish law and philosophy (he authored *Moreh Nevuchim*, “Guide for the Perplexed,” a foundational work on Jewish philosophy), Rambam also served in his own times as a true leader in a challenging era as well as a world famous physician and master of medicine and philosophy.

Rambam’s literary works are a series of groundbreaking initiatives. After authoring an exhaustive commentary on the entire Mishnah, an entirely innovative project, he wrote *Sefer Ha-Mitzvos*, “the Book of Commandments,” in order to clarify in brief (a) which of the Torah’s hundreds of directives (positive commands and prohibitions) are included in the primary body of 613 *mitzvos*, (b) their sources in the Torah and Talmud, and (c) their consequences and the extent of their application.

The clarity introduced by *Sefer Ha-Mitzvos* was intended to facilitate the creation and broad acceptance of his main work, *Mishneh Torah* – an exhaustive compendium of all of the Torah’s laws, laid out in clear, concise language and arranged in a logical, methodical, and accessible manner. *Mishneh Torah* includes laws of the Jewish people’s past, present, and future – from the laws of the *beis ha-mikdash* (Holy Temple in Jerusalem) and sacrifices to the laws of Moshiach and the redemption of the Jewish people at the end of days. This work stands alone in history, for such an exhaustive and brilliant enterprise had never been produced before, nor has it been replicated.

Even his tombstone is entirely unique. The inscription reads, “From Moshe until Moshe, there rose none like Moshe” – the latter half paraphrased from the verse, “*And there was no other prophet who arose in Israel like Moses, whom G-d knew face to face*” (*Devarim* 34:10). It could be said that whereas Moshe Rabeinu gave the Jews the entire Torah, partly in written form and partly by oral tradition, Rambam merged the two and presented the Jewish people the entire body of Torah laws in written form.

Rambam emerged from the golden era of Sefardic Jewry – he lived in Spain, Morocco, and Egypt, and authored all his writings with the exception of *Mishneh Torah* in Arabic (they were subsequently translated into Medieval Hebrew). Nevertheless, all of Jewry came to revere the authority of his writings.

In general, a reference to “Rambam” as a subject refers to *Mishneh Torah*.

Did You Know?!

The word *YAD* (from the name *Yad ha-Chazakah*) has the numerical value of 14, equal to the amount of volumes that make up the *Mishneh Torah*.

THE FOURTEEN BOOKS ARE:

<i>Mada</i> - Knowledge	<i>Hafla’ah</i> - Vows	<i>Tahara</i> - Purity
<i>Ahava</i> - Love	<i>Zera’im</i> - Agriculture	<i>Nezikin</i> - Damages
<i>Zemanim</i> - Times	<i>Avoda</i> - (Temple) service	<i>Kinyan</i> - Acquisitions
<i>Nashim</i> - Women	<i>Korbonos</i> - Sacrifices	<i>Mishpatim</i> - Laws
<i>Kedusha</i> - Holiness		<i>Shoftim</i> - Judges

DAILY STUDY OF RAMBAM

Rambam Initiative

On the final day of Pesach in 1984, the Rebbe launched a bold new initiative to bring the study of Rambam's *Mishneh Torah* to all Jews in all places and that the study be undertaken daily and in concert with all other Jews.

In addition to the Torah topics that each person regularly pursues according to his individual ability, be it Talmud Bavli or Talmud Yerushalmi, laws that are necessary to know for practical observance, or any other Torah subject – I hereby propose that each individual accept upon himself bli neder (without the force of a binding oath) to study a daily portion of Mishneh Torah.

Likkutei Sichos, vol. 32, p. 271ff.

With this initiative, the Rebbe brought to fruition – and even surpassed – Rambam's original intention in authoring *Mishneh Torah*, namely, that all of the Torah's laws be made readily available for the masses, including those who cannot approach the more scholarly study of the Talmud and the like:

... all in clear and concise terms, so that the entire Oral Law could be organized in each person's mouth ... for all the laws to be revealed to both those of lesser stature and those of greater stature, regarding every single mitzvah, and also all the practices that were ordained by the Sages and the Prophets.

Rambam's Introduction to *Mishneh Torah*

According to the Rebbe's vision, the full set of Torah laws as systemically set out by Rambam are not merely indispensable to each Jew's personal library, but they are to be actively studied by all Jews, regardless of background, age, or gender, on a daily basis.

Three Tracks

The Rambam initiative calls for an annual completion of the entire *Mishneh Torah*, including Rambam's lengthy explanatory introduction.

However, acknowledging that not everyone is capable of reviewing three chapters of *Mishneh Torah* each day as required to keep pace with the program to complete it annually, the Rebbe introduced the initiative with three distinct tracks:

- 1) *Three chapters per day, so that the entire Mishneh Torah is completed in just less than one year.*
- 2) *Those who are unable to learn three chapters a day should learn one chapter a day – completing the entire Mishneh Torah in a little less than three years.*
- 3) *Those who are unable to study Mishneh Torah at all should study Sefer HaMitzvos; [the daily portions should include] the mitzvos that correspond to the three-chapters-per-day cycle.*

These options make it possible for everyone to participate in this collective, unified effort, regardless of their scope of knowledge.

Likkutei Sichos, vol. 32, p. 271ff.

Accordingly, men and women, and even children, who may not have the time or ability to study even a single chapter of *Mishneh Torah* on a daily basis can nevertheless be included in this remarkable global Torah project.

Goal: Unity and Redemption

The primary purpose for this initiative is the fullest and most effective unity between all Jews.

In the book of Tanya, the author describes in detail the powerful unity generated by Torah study, by which the Jew who studies and the Torah subject he reviews experience “a wondrous union, like which there is none other” (Tanya, Ch. 5). This can be taken a step further: When a number of Jews unite in the shared study of a particular Torah topic, then the same wondrous union occurs not only between each participant and the Torah, but also between the participants themselves. No force can bring truer unity between diverse Jews than the Torah. And such unity reaches its ultimate expression when *all* Jews study the *entire* Torah and in *concert*:

The unity of Jews through Torah could be produced by learning any topic. But since “Israel is linked to the Torah” — meaning every aspect of a Jew and Jewry is connected to Torah in its entirety — the ultimate unity is produced by learning something which encompasses the whole Torah.

Ibid.

The only book suitable for such a goal is Rambam’s *Mishneh Torah* – “the Repetition of the Torah,” in which Rambam sets out to present a systematic summary of the entire body of Written and Oral Law.

It is both obvious and important to highlight that in addition to the mystical unity, the initiative carries the natural harmony of joint intellectual endeavor:

This unity is in addition to the warmth and closeness among those who learn a common subject when they together discuss and analyze its ideas.

Ibid.

The overriding concern is not study per se, but that of Jewish unity. Thus the daily study of Sefer HaMitzvos under this initiative does *not* follow the order in which Rambam composed the book. Rather, only the portions of the book that correspond to the three-chapter-a-day cycle is studied on any given day. For example, if that day's three chapters happen to cover seven distinct biblical commands or prohibitions, then the material equivalent to those seven commands or prohibitions will be studied by those following the Sefer HaMitzvos track. Conversely, if that day's three chapters elaborate on previously introduced laws – without introducing any new *mitzvos* at all – then those following the Sefer HaMitzvos track will simply repeat the *previous* day's material that corresponds to those laws.

In order to preserve the purpose of Jewish unity, an individual who joins the initiative in the midst of a cycle should *not* start at the beginning of *Mishneh Torah*. Rather, he should study the material being reviewed by all other Jews that day (and only later seek to study prior material, if possible).¹

As desirable as authentic Jewish unity is in and of itself, in this case it is a tool to an even more urgent and marvelous goal:

Unity among Jews is such an important matter that all efforts must be undertaken to achieve it. For unity hastens the final redemption: The cause of the exile, our Sages state, was baseless hatred among Jews. When love and unity reign among Jews, the cause of the exile will have been abolished — and thus automatically the exile itself will be ended.

Ibid.

Did You Know?!

BLI NEDER

“The practice of studying Rambam daily is undertaken bli neder [as a non-binding commitment], but with a firm commitment that will surely lead to actual fulfillment.”

Toras Menachem 5749, vol. 2, p. 227

1 Likkutei Sichos, vol. 32, p. 271ff.

Fulfilling a Biblical Command

A secondary benefit of joining the Rambam initiative, the Rebbe explained,² is that each Jew is instructed to study the Torah in its entirety. One way to fulfill this obligation is to study all of the Torah laws, and such an undertaking can be done only by studying *Mishneh Torah*; other works of *halachah* such as *Shulchan Aruch* are limited to laws that are relevant during times of exile.

Learning the Laws of Moshiach

The most basic manner of fulfilling the obligation to study the entire Torah is to become familiar with laws that relate to daily life as a Jew. For this purpose as well, *Mishneh Torah* can be considered unique in the sense that every Jew awaits Moshiach's coming *every day*, and as a result, the laws of sacrifices and the like that will apply in the imminent era of redemption can be considered relevant to daily life at present. It is necessary to be prepared for the reality in which such material will become pertinent instantaneously.

Did You Know?!

There is mention of **daily Rambam study** as far back as the **year 5281**. In a letter describing life in **Jerusalem** at that time it states "Every evening we learn one chapter of Rambam".

There is mention of daily **Rambam study in the city of Safed in the year 5363**. In a letter describing life at that time it states "After evening and morning prayer, groups form and study with their teacher... This [one] group studies the Rambam in a regular fashion (*B'Kvius*)."

The Maggid of Mezritch writes in a letter to **the Alter Rebbe** that "In the evening, after evening prayers, you should **study the holy Rambam**".

Mekoros L'Toldos HaChinuch B'Yisrael, Vol 3, p. 10; Shivchei Ha'Ari (Likueti Ha'ari 25b); Maggid Devarav L'Yaakov, addendum, p. 53.

² Ibid.

TIMING OPTIONS

On Schedule

Like Chitas, it is important to study the portions of Rambam on the scheduled days. In fact, this is critical to achieving a fundamental goal of the Rambam study initiative, namely, Jewish unity through Torah study. The Rebbe made this point clear when he originally launched the initiative:

“Mishneh Torah should be apportioned into sections, so that a different section is studied each day. This way, all Jews will learn one and the same section on any given day.”

“Mishneh Torah is divided in daily portions to be studied by all Jews ... [for the sake of achieving the superior] unity that is produced by studying the identical Torah topic.”

Likkutei Sichos, vol. 32, pp. 271 ff.; fn. 22

As he did regarding the daily Chitas, the Rebbe repeatedly urged us to live with the spiritual times, by extracting inspiration and guidance in divine service from the portions of Rambam studied on any particular day – and to view them as timely and providential.³ For example, he urged Rabbis preparing speeches for any occasion to include a lesson derived from the chapters of Rambam studied that day or week.⁴ Needless to say, the Rebbe personally led by example in his public addresses.⁵

When Days Run Into Nights

Despite being aware of the importance of studying the daily Rambam on its scheduled day, it happens on occasion that one realizes after the day is over that he did not study his daily portions. In such a case, the Rebbe instructed that compensation of the study “can and must be done at night, up until midnight, or even until the crack of dawn.”⁶

3 Torash Menachem 5745, vol. 1, p. 248.

4 Torash Menachem 5749, vol. 1, p. 309.

5 Later published by Vaad Hanochos Balahak in two volumes, titled “*Yayin Malchus*”.

6 *Sefer HaSichos* 5749, p. 194, fn. 39. See also *Toras Menachem* 5749, vol. 1, p. 192 – “Recently, the practice to study a daily section of Rambam ... three chapters a day, has become widespread. Although this is a large quantity of material, and there is possibly insufficient time to study it properly during the day [including the night ...]

Joining the Initiative in Mid-cycle

The main Rambam cycle (3 chapters a day) begins again each year. One who plans to join this global initiative should not wait until the new cycle, but should begin participating immediately. In such a case, the Rebbe offered the following guidance:

“Those who first participate after the study of Rambam has already begun, should start by studying the daily portion which the others are studying, in order that he unite with the others participants, and with time he should gradually⁷ study the earlier, missed portions.”

Likkutei Sichos, vol. 32, pp. 271 ff.⁸

READING VS. UNDERSTANDING

Comprehending Rambam

Rambam’s *Mishneh Torah* or *Sefer HaMitzvos* clearly belong to the designation of Rabbinical writings.⁹ A basic comprehension is therefore necessary, and one should study the daily portion in a manner in which he comprehends the plain meaning of its laws.¹⁰

Ideally, he should select at least one law per day to study in somewhat greater depth.¹¹ Naturally, the more laws studied in this manner,¹² the better.

However, the Rebbe believes we are capable of even more:

“In addition to increasing one’s care in following the daily study schedule, and studying with enthusiasm and passion, it is also appropriate to add in comprehension – he should apply himself more thoroughly to the study, and completely comprehend the subjects with his intellect (ChaBaD).”

7 “Or he can study them quickly! Let each person be guided by his temperament [and ability]” (*Toras Menachem* 5745, vol. 3, p. 2418).

8 See also *Toras Menachem* 5749, vol. 2, p. 157.

9 See above p ____.

10 See *Sichah* for 2nd day of Shavuos 5744, in which the Rebbe elaborates on Rambam’s stated intention to compose his *Mishneh Torah* in a language and style that makes its study simple and straightforward (*Toras Menachem* 5744, vol. 3, p. 1943).

11 *Sefer HaSichos* 5749, p. 194

12 See *Toras Menachem* 5745, vol. 3, p. 1614. See also *Likutei Sichos*, vol. 32 p. 271, fn 23.

Studying in Sequence

It is of great importance to study the chapters of Mishneh Torah in sequence. When Rambam first composed his vast compendium of laws, he chose for the sake of brevity to constantly rely on earlier statements and clarifications of terms and principles instead of repeatedly explaining them all each time the need arises.

Since details critical to a complete understanding of a particular law may be absent – having been detailed in the compendium’s earlier chapters, sections, or books – one cannot assume he fully understands a particular law without having studying all the previous material. If he were to indeed study exclusive sections of Mishneh Torah, he may err in his understanding of the law.¹³

Did You Know?!

The entire concept of pursuing a daily study cycle emphasizes a profound spiritual achievement – uniting that which transcends time with time itself. The Torah is divine wisdom and it is essentially beyond [Creation and therefore transcends] the phenomenon of time [and space]. (The mitzvos, by contrast, are instructions to man that guide his conduct in the physical world. The mitzvos therefore operate within the phenomenon of time.) Despite the Torah transcendence, we successfully draw it down into the realm of time, by determining that a specific portion of Torah will be studied on a particular date. We achieve this through studying the daily Chitas (referred to as living with the spiritual time), the daily Rambam, and the like.

Sefer HaSichos 5749, p. 194

¹³ *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 32, pp. 271 ff.; fn. 22.

ADVANTAGES OF RAMBAM STUDY

Unity in the Torah - All the Mitzvos of the Torah

One needs to complete all 613 commandments in action, speech and thought. Therefore, one should study the (*Mishneh Torah* of the) Rambam... which includes in it an explanation for all the 613 mitzvos.¹⁴

Study which Brings to Deed

Another important advantage to learning *Mishneh Torah* — concerning the mitzvah of Torah study: “Study which leads to deed — they are the laws which every person needs to know [in order] to observe the mitzvos properly.”¹⁵

Did You Know?!

It is appropriate to remind everyone, in every location, about the daily study of Rambam. It is even better to study these laws berabim, as a communal study.

Toras Menachem 5749, vol. 2, p. 370

14 *Ohr Tzadikim* (Rabbi Meir Papiras (5384-5422), *Amud Hatefilah*, 22:19.

15 *Likutei Sichos*, vol. 32, p. 271ff.

SIGNIFICANCE OF JOINING THE TAKANAH OF (COMMUNAL) RAMBAM STUDY

The Rebbe's Command

Recently, there was an additional institution of the study - the study of Rambam. And although the person studying is doing so because it is an enactment of Sages, he is, however, fulfilling the biblical command to study Torah. It is only that he has here the additional, unique and precious quality, of fulfilling the command of his Rebbe.¹⁶

Live with the Rambam

Based on the saying of the Alter Rebbe that “One should live with the times”, which means that one must live with the weekly Torah portion (Written Torah), one can understand that this also includes the daily study that one has in the Oral Torah (for the Written Torah was given to Moshe together with its explanation - the Oral Torah). This includes also the daily study of Rambam (which is part of the Oral Torah).¹⁷

¹⁶ *Sefer Hasichos* 5749, vol. 2, p.412.

¹⁷ Talk delivered on Taanis Esther, 5747

REWARDS AND BENEFITS OF DAILY RAMBAM STUDY

The Arrival of Moshiach

The daily study of Rambam among Jews is one of the things which hastens the coming of the final redemption. For this study causes a unity amongst Jews, (which is the opposite of hatred amongst Jews, the cause of exile). And the topic of study is Halachos (Jewish Law), about which it says: “the exiled will be ingathered in the merit of Mishnayus”, and Mishna is Jewish Law.¹⁸

Removal of Negative Forces / Fear of Heaven

I have received from my holy teacher (the **Ba'al Shem Tov**) that study of Rambam is a *segulah* (spiritual remedy) for fear of heaven, and to eradicate external [negative forces].¹⁹

Financial Difficulties

To someone who wrote to the Rebbe for a blessing and advice on how to get out of financial debt, the Rebbe answered with a question: “Have you already fulfilled your obligation in the study of Rambam?”²⁰

18 Talk delivered on Shabbas Parshas Balak, 5748.

19 *Magid Devarav L'Yaakov*, addendum, p. 53.

20 *Mishneh Torah Hasholeim, Mahaduras Feldi*, Chazak Publications, p. 6, fn 6.

Health

There are 83 (topics of) *halachos* (laws) in Rambam. The Talmud²¹ teaches that the Hebrew word for disease, *machala*, has the numerical value of eighty-three, and this is because there are eighty-three forms of diseases. We see here an allusion (*Remez*) and connection of the number eighty-three as it pertains to the eighty-three topics of Halacha in the Rambam, in that through the study of the eighty-three *halachos* of Rambam, a person effects complete health. Even more so, a person is cured through G-d in a way that he never becomes sick, because “all the sicknesses... I will not bring upon you.”²²

Did You Know?!

RAMBAM IN ENGLISH

When Rambam is studied in the language of the land, the “Torah of My servant, Moshe” effectively penetrates all worldly realms. The wisdom of the Torah is drawn from the loftiest, supernal levels and penetrates the world in languages other than the Holy Tongue.

Shabbos Parshas Tezaveh, Parshas Zachor, 5745.

²¹ *Bava Kama* 92b.

²² *Hisvaduyos* 5746, vol. 2, p. 246

ABOUT CHAYENU

Chayenu subscribers receive a weekly Torah publication, in Hebrew and English, focused on the daily study cycles of Chumash with Rashi, Tanya, Rambam and much more. Chayenu publications also feature fresh content on various topics from a variety of relevant and inspirational Torah sources and classical commentaries. Founded in 2009, Chayenu quickly grew in popularity and is now studied by thousands of people in about 500 cities in over 45 countries across the world.

To subscribe to chayenu visit **chayenu.org/subscribe** or email **info@chayenu.org** or call **718-450-2377**

THIS EDITION IS GENEROUSLY SPONSORED IN
HONOR OF THE SHLOSHIM AND IN MEMORY OF

DON YOSEF BEN MENACHEM ע"ה

BRAHAM

*R. Don who passed away on 8 Shevat 5777
was a kind and friendly Chossid and an
extraordinary Ba'al Tzedakah.*

