

Kuntres Limud HaRambam

*Informational booklet on
the study of Rambam*



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3 CHAYENU

Foreword



It is not an exaggeration to say you can fulfill the Rebbe's dream. As you will read in the following pages, the Rebbe called the Takanah (initiative) of daily studying of Rambam his "dream." But why was it so important to the Rebbe?

In this small booklet, we will share a short overview of how the Takanah of learning Rambam daily began, the importance of joining the Takanah, and why learning 3 perakim a day is ideal.

We hope that when you are finished reading, the many accomplishments of learning Rambam will inspire you, and you will take the jump of learning 3 Perakim of Rambam, thereby strengthening your hiskashrus to the Rebbe (see the "Accomplishments and Rewards" section).

What is Limud HaRambam

Rambam's Mishneh Torah is the only compilation that includes all the Halachos of the entire Torah, in a concise manner and with precise language. Nevertheless, it has forever been "stowed away" for the Rosh Yeshiva or the philosopher, until the extraordinary Sichah of the Rebbe on Acharon Shel Pesach, in the year 5744.

"While on the topic of Rambam, I'd like to make the following suggestion: we know that there are several study cycles with which people complete the entire Shas (Bavli or

Yerushalmi) by learning a small section each day. It would be a good idea to initiate a similar cycle dedicated to the study of Rambam's Mishneh Torah, learning a part each day and completing the entire sefer."

With this Takana (initiative), the Rebbe made Limud HaRambam an asset that belongs to every person, regardless of status and level of scholarship. Learning the entire Torah through Rambam's Mishneh Torah was now possible for everyone.

A Takana propelled by Bochorim

This Takana of learning Rambam is remarkable in that it was initially propelled by Bochorim, endeavoring to gift the Rebbe.

The Rebbe said at the

farbrengen of Acharon Shel Pesach, 5744:

"It's been several years now that I've been waiting for someone to take up the idea of dividing the sefer of Rambam until finally

they actually did so in one of the Sefardische countries. The entire sefer was divided amongst many students, and collectively they completed the entire sefer in close proximity to Rambam's birthday this year."

To understand what the Rebbe was referring to, let's go back to Yud-Tes Kislev of that year.

The Rebbe farbrenged twice in connection to Yud-Tes Kislev, one farbrengen took place on Thursday night, and a second farbrengen on Shabbos, Chof Kislev. At one point in that second farbrengen, while discussing the siyum on Shas, the Rebbe declared that the time had come to begin studying the Sefer Halachos of the Rambam, the Mishneh Torah, in a similar fashion.

No one acted upon this directive, besides for some Bochorim in Casablanca, Morocco, the city where

Rambam himself had lived for a while. The Talmidim HaShluchim who learned the sicha decided to launch a campaign to fulfill the Rebbe's wishes.

The plan was to apportion the Rambam in the same way Shas was divided: each person would take it upon themselves to learn a set of Halochos. The campaign would start on Yud Shvat with the goal to collectively finish the entire Mishneh Torah by Yud Alef Nissan.

The Bochorim sent a detailed report (Duch) to the Rebbe, and received a letter back beginning with the words, "*Your letter which was included was received, V'Tach.*" They now felt they had done the right thing and given the Rebbe nachas.

But the story didn't stop there. On Acharon Shel Pesach, when the Rebbe initiated the Takanah, the Rebbe mentioned the feat accomplished by the

Bochurim in Morocco and compared and contrasted the Takanah with their accomplishment. The Rebbe said:

“True, a similar idea has already been done in one of the Sefardishe countries, but there they divided the entire sefer by giving

each participant a small section to learn. It would be better if each and every individual would complete the entire sefer on his own.”

As the Rebbe explained, in this way every Jew can learn the entire Rambam, and fulfill the Mitzvah of learning the entire Torah.

You Can Learn It Too

Learning Rambam can seem like a difficult task, especially learning 3 perakim a day. But when considering some of the directives the Rebbe gave about Limmud HaRambam, one can easily conclude that this is a possible and attainable Takanah.

Rambam writes that the reason he wrote the Mishneh Torah is: for one to be able to study and understand the Torah’s laws from the words of the Talmud (Bavli and Yerushalmi), Sifra, Sifri, Tosefta, the Gaonim,

etc., one needs “a broad mind, a wise soul and much time.” Therefore, Rambam continues, “I intently studied all these works with the view of putting together the results obtained from them in regard to what is forbidden and permitted, clean and unclean, and the other laws of the Torah—all in clear language and terse style ... without citing questions and solutions, or differences of opinions ... so that all the laws be accessible to small and great...”

“That all the laws be accessible to small and great” means that even one who has scant knowledge of Torah (“small”), who is incapable of deducing the actual halachah from the Talmud’s discussion, will know the law by learning Mishneh Torah.

Because of this simplistic approach of Rambam’s writing, it was established that one learns 3 chapters of Rambam each day,

because when the learning is in a straightforward manner (as Rambam intended), then this is no difficult task (2nd day of Shavuos 5744).

Reading the Rambam with a focused mind, understanding the meaning of the words, and the basic Halachic concept are precisely the intent of Rambam with his writing Mishneh Torah and the Rebbe with his Takanah.

Rambam In English

A person can never be satisfied with a little of something good if he can have more of it. Therefore, learning Rambam with a translation into the language that a person speaks is surely helpful to their grasp of the laws. But here, the Rebbe points out another advantage:

When Rambam is studied in the language of the

land, the Torah effectively penetrates the worldly realms in its purest, holiest form. Thus, 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 Tetzaveh, Parshas Zachor, 5745).

But Why 3 (You Ask)

At the inception of the Takanah and numerous times afterward the Rebbe made an emphasis on the study of 3 perakim a day. Clarifying that the primary Takana is to learn 3 chapters a day, and complete the entire Rambam in one year, comparing it to the completion of the Torah every year. And only if one is incapable of this can he study one chapter a day.

One should join in the study of Rambam's Mishneh Torah, in a track—practiced by many Jews—of 3 Perakim a day. Through this routine the study cycle is finished within the year of its starting [similar to the annual finishing of the

Torah, which the Rambam named his sefer after—“Mishneh Torah”]. One who cannot partake in this study routine should learn at least one Perek a day or learn Sefer Hamitzvos (29 Teves 5749).

The Rebbe explained further:

It is self-understood that if someone can learn 3 Perakim a day, he does not fulfill his obligation by learning just one perek a day. In fact, for this person, learning one Perek might be Bitul Torah (not fulfilling the Mitzvah of studying Torah in the most proper manner)... (Shabbos Parshas Tetzaveh, Parshas Zachor, 5745).

For Bochorim

The Rebbe singled out Yeshivah bochorim several times concerning the study

of Rambam, explaining how the Takana pertains especially to them.

In certain Yeshivos, they only learn in a manner of charifus, delving deeply into the subjects of Gemora, without covering much ground. The students can spend an entire 'zman' learning only six or ten blatt. When finishing their studies at Yeshivah, aside for the few mesichtos covered in Yeshivah, the students are left with many more 'bletter' of Gemora which they are obligated to know, but will never learn.

This was indeed one of the reasons for instituting the daily study of Rambam. For the Rambam covers all the Halochos of Torah Shebaal-peh in their entirety (Shabbos Parshas Korach, 5744).

Towards the end of a yechidus for Bochorim, the Rebbe blessed them with learning the entire Torah. The Rebbe said:

This begins with having a daily shiur in learning

Rambam, which contains the entire Torah within it. The Alter Rebbe explains the importance of knowing all the halachos of Torah, as has been said several times... yehi ratzon that you should learn Torah, all parts of Torah, thereby fulfilling the will of the Alter Rebbe.

This is a defined and attainable task, achievable through learning and knowing the Rambam from beginning to end. It can be accomplished in the manner that has become customary: to learn three perokim daily and finish the Rambam—at least once—every year...

May you all add in your Torah study diligently, transcending all measures and limitations, to the point that when you wake up in the midst of your sleep, Torah is on your mind. Furthermore: even during your sleep, you will dream about Torah!
(Sichos Kodesh 5752 vol. 1, p. 249)

The Accomplishments and Rewards of Limmud Harambam

HISKASHRUS

One has an additional, unique and precious quality, [when he participates in the Takanah of learning Rambam, that] of fulfilling a command of his Rebbe (Sefer Hasichos 5749, vol. 2, p. 412).

ACHDUS YISROEL

One of the principal elements in the study of Rambam is the unification of Jewry, because every Jew would be learning the same thing at the same time.¹

[Mishneh Torah is the ideal sefer to be used to unite all Jews through learning Torah for numerous reasons.

- 1) It is a book that unites the entire Torah, since it includes the entire Torah.
- 2) Every Jew can understand the simple meaning of Rambam.²

Sefer Hayad, a sefer of halachos, is a sefer that all Yidden can share an equal understanding of.]

KOL HATORAH KULAH

The Alter Rebbe rules in Hilchos Talmud Torah that every person is obligated to know the entire Torah; learning Rambam is an efficient way of achieving that goal.

¹ Likkutei Sichos vol 27, p. 230

² Toras Menachem 5744 part 3 p. 1983

BRINGING MOSHIACH

There are two reasons why learning Rambam hastens the redemption:

- 1) Since exile was caused by unwarranted hatred, it follows that the Jewish unity fostered by the study of Rambam will hasten the redemption.
- 2) The sages teach: “The exiles will only be redeemed by virtue of Mishnayos.” Mishnayos are halachos gathered and taught without including their reasons. Similarly, the Rambam is “Concise... without questions and answers.” So just like the study of Mishnayos, the study itself of the halachos of Rambam hastens the redemption.

WAKING UP THE WORLD

“One might ask, why have we suddenly begun with this shturem about studying Rambam? Why have we come out so blatantly saying—ם—מ'דארף לערנען רמב"ם! Sure! הערט זיך איין אידן! Surely there are plenty of people who already learned Rambam in the past, so why the tumult now?”

The answer is that the world today is (spiritually) asleep, and the only way to awaken everyone is by making a shturem about learning Rambam” (Parshas Emor 5744).

PERFECT HEALTH

There are 83 topics of law in the Rambam. The Talmud teaches that the Hebrew word for disease, “machala,” has the numerical value of 83, and this is because there are 83 forms of disease that can affect the bile. This alludes to the idea that through the study of the 83 halachos of Rambam, one

can achieve complete health. That's not to say that studying Rambam only helps those who are sick; it is said to prevent sickness in the first place, as it says in Exodus 15:26, "all the sicknesses... I will not bring upon you" (Sefer Hitvaduyos 5746, vol. 2, p. 246).

OVERCOMING DEBT

To a person who was struggling with overwhelming debt, the Rebbe wrote to him, in short but no uncertain terms: "Have you fulfilled your obligations regarding the study of Rambam" (Mishneh Torah Hasholeim Mahaduras Feldi, Chazak Publications, p. 6, fn 6).

REMOVING NEGATIVITY

The Mezritcher Maggid said, *"I have learned from my holy teacher [the Ba'al Shem Tov] that the study of Rambam is a segulah (spiritual remedy) for fear of heaven, and to eradicate external negative forces"* (Magid Devarav L'Yaakov, addendum, p. 105.).

FULFILL THE REBBE'S DREAM!

The Rebbe referred to the Takona of learning Rambam as his "dream."

"May it be G-d's will that this 'dream' of uniting all the Jewish people through the study of Rambam, which has already taken off and is constantly spreading and gaining new adherents each day, should be completely accomplished. Then all the Yidden wherever they may be will be united in a complete manner ('shleimus') by completing the Torah in its entirety ('b'shleimusa')." (Hisvaaduyos 5744 vol. 4, p. 2222.)

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