

לזכות
 אסתר רחל תחי'
 לרגל יום הולדתה כ"ח תמוז
 לשנת הצלחה בגו"ר
 נדפס ע"י הוריה
 הרה"ת ר' יוסף יצחק אהרן ו
 זוגתו מרת נחמה בילא ומשפחתם שיחיו
 בראקמאן



Learning

Rambam

A Farbrengen

This year's Siyum Harambam falls out, quite remarkably, on Gimmel Tammuz, bearing a resemblance to the first Siyum Harambam, which took place on Yud-Alef Nissan 5745. To mark the special day, A Chassidisher Derher sat down with a number of Chassidim, shluchim and baalei batim, to hear about their Rambam experience, and to receive their advice, tips and inspiration.¹ In preparation of this article we were greatly assisted by the resources available at Rambam.today, an online portal with daily shiurim in Rambam, virtual siyumim, and much more.*

Can you tell us a bit about those early days when you started learning Rambam?

Dr. Chaim Hecht: I always had some interest in Rambam, being that he was a doctor, as I am. In fact, a year before the *mivtza*, I began a *chavrusa* to learn a perek of Rambam once a week. At the time, I made a calculation that I would be able to finish the entire Mishneh Torah over a period of 25 years.



Suddenly, the Rebbe came out with a *mivtza* to learn the entire thing in one year. I was shell-shocked. I had only attended yeshiva for one year of my life. Some of the rabbis, who had learned in yeshiva for many years, were intimidated as well. The entire thing? From start to finish in one year?

I got ahold of the only English translation that existed, published by Yale Press in 1949 — some of it was even translated by non-Jews — and I would take it to Kinko's and make copies for the Chicago community, where I live. One rabbi would give a class in shul, and others would try on their own.

We started with *shloscha perakim* because that was obviously what the Rebbe wanted. From the Rebbe's *sichos*, we understood that it would be a *bedieved* for us to learn *perek echad* or Sefer Hamitzvos. Rabbi Shmuel Dovid Raichik was a *shadar* who would visit Chicago, and that year, he convinced a lot of people to learn *shloscha perakim*, even those who have very little formal Torah education.

At first, I assumed that the *mivtza* would be a one-year project; for some reason, I thought to myself, the Rebbe wants us to learn Rambam this year. Alright. But then, Chicago's legendary *mashpia*, Rabbi Nochum Goodman, told us, "Boys, I'm telling you, the Rebbe is not going to let you out of this. Get the thoughts of one year out of your head; this is a forever *mivtza*..."

In the early days, Sichos in English arranged for a new technology to be used for Rambam: answering machines. Normally, the recording on an answering machine lasts only a few seconds, but they arranged for special tape recorders which lasted for hours, and they would record the Rambam and people could call in and listen. We, in Chicago, ran the project.

"BOYS, I'M TELLING YOU, THE REBBE IS NOT GOING TO LET YOU OUT OF THIS. GET THE THOUGHTS OF ONE YEAR OUT OF YOUR HEAD; THIS IS A FOREVER MIVTZA..."

People who were serious about it had to really reorganize their lives. I was chairman of the radiology department in Mt. Sinai Hospital in Chicago, and part of my job was to attend hours and hours of boring meetings. I started bringing copies of Rambam and learning it there. When they developed Palm Pilots, I got Rambam on it, and then iPhones came around, and it became even easier. Now, I have Rambam on my phone, and in between meetings and reading X-rays I learn a few *halachos*. With technology in our day, everything has become so easy and available that there is no excuse not to learn Rambam properly. I myself have several Rambam apps on my phone, and when I have a free moment, I can even learn some Rambam *b'iyun*.

That's not to say that it is an easy endeavor. It was difficult going during the first few years, but as the years go on, it becomes easier and easier. For the second Siyum Harambam in Chicago, we brought Rabbi Adin Even Yisrael (Steinsaltz) to speak. These early events were very special; many new people would get involved in Rambam each time. He encouraged everyone to get involved. Even if the first year you don't understand much, he told us, you will gain new insight in each additional round.

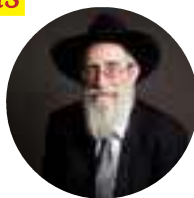
Indeed, each year, we pick up on new things that were never noticed or understood. Today, after many years of learning, when I take a *masechta* for Siyum Hashas, I have a whole new appreciation for the Gemara from the Rambam.

The *mivtza* changed my perception entirely. Today I laugh when I remember my original plan to learn Rambam over 25 years. The Rebbe showed me that I can actually do the whole thing each year, and it has changed the very make-up of my day; it changed my way of life. Every day revolves around Torah. It has

been the biggest blessing in my life, and I know of many others who will testify the same.

How does learning Rambam strengthen our *hiskashrus* to the Rebbe?

Rabbi Shmuel Lew: The Rebbe explained the significance of Rambam on many occasions, but let me share with you something very personal that took place 60 years ago, around Yud Shevat 5721*. It was just before my twenty-first birthday; I went into *yechidus* on Sunday night, around two or three in the morning.



During the Yud Shevat farbrengen the night before, the Rebbe said that sometimes a person has a sudden awakening for *hiskashrus* to the Rebbe, and he must do everything in his power to harness the *hisorerus* and express it in action; to anchor it and give it grounding, so to speak.

Now, in *yechidus*, I told the Rebbe that I indeed had the desire to do what the Rebbe wants, but how, specifically, should I bring it into action?

The Rebbe began his answer by saying, “*Der ikar hiskashrus iz durch Torah*—the main connection is through Torah.” He mentioned Chitas, and explained that when I study what he studies, it creates a tremendous bond unparalleled in the entire world, as explained in Tanya Perek Hei.

That was before the years of Rambam. But in the later years, when the Rebbe instituted the *takana*, there was something unique about Rambam, even in comparison to Chitas. On Erev Yom Kippur 5746*, the Rebbe spoke about the daily *shiurim* of Chitas and Rambam, but he mentioned that Rambam has a “*chavivus meyuchedes*,” it was especially precious to him, “*mitzad di maileh fun kav shelo*,” because this was the Rebbe’s personal initiative and contribution.²

To me, it seems quite simple that if you want to be a Chossid, the first and most basic step is to learn the Torah that the Rebbe tells us to learn in a proper fashion, in addition to learning the Rebbe’s Torah as well.

Dr. Hecht: On a very practical level, learning Rambam each day makes us feel our connection to the Rebbe. Rambam was the Rebbe’s personal initiative. The Rebbe gave it an unbelievable amount of attention — he dedicated a *sicha* to Rambam at almost every farbrengen. In simple terms: If you want to be a Chossid — this is the number one job.

When I feel challenged to finish the daily Rambam, I remind myself that when I learn Rambam, I am with the Rebbe and the Rebbe is with me. I feel this in a very real way.

How does one choose which cycle is fitting for them?

Rabbi Lew: Should I learn *perek echad* or *shloshe perakim*? That is a question one should ask themselves and their *mashpia*. There is no doubt to me that the Rebbe wanted *shloshe perakim* to be the flagship of the *mitvza*, learned by anyone who is capable of doing so.

Rabbi Chaim Farro was the Rebbe’s shliach in Manchester for many years. At one point, he was preparing and delivering a daily shiur in *perek echad*, which was consuming much time and energy, and he found it difficult to learn three *perokim* every day in addition to that. When he wrote to the Rebbe that he was considering to suffice with only one *perek* even for himself, the Rebbe replied:

ה"ז פלא!!! ה"ה רב וצ"ל מעלין בקודש.

This is shocking!!! You are a *rav*, and you must [live by the *halacha* of] ‘*maalin bakodesh*’—ascending in matters of holiness.



Rambam for Joy

Rabbi Zushe Feldman relates:

At one point in my life, I was going through a difficult period and was feeling down. I wrote to the Rebbe, and he answered,

“למוד רמב"ם וחת"ת, פקודי ה' ישרים משמחי לב, וכל התוצאות המסובבים מזה כמובן. אזעה"צ שיהיה בהצלחה רבה ויבשר טוב.

“Study Rambam and Chitas — ‘the laws of Hashem [which] are straightforward and bring joy to the heart’ — and all the obvious results will follow. I will mention you at the *Tziyun* for much success, and may you report good news.”





RASKIN FAMILY ARCHIVES

SIYUM HARAMBAM IN FEZ, MOROCCO, 5748*

Not every person is able to learn *shloscha perakim*. However, whichever path you choose, you need to take it seriously. My usual recommendation is to learn three *perakim*, but to choose one section — such as one *perek* (or even one *halacha*)— to learn in a better way than the others.

Some people view Rambam as something for *anash*. Is it applicable to the wider Jewish world? How can we bring it to them?

Rabbi Dovid Masinter: In the earlier years, the Rebbe encouraged everyone, not specifically Chassidim, to study Chitas — the Friediker Rebbe's initiative. Rambam is the Rebbe's personal initiative. No doubt, it is not just a *takana* for us Chassidim but for the world at large, and it is our job to bring it to the world.

This is not my own opinion. The Rebbe clearly set out the *takana* as something to unite the entire



Jewish people, and that is why he made different levels, including Sefer Hamitzvos. The Rebbe did not want it to be only for *anash*. He wanted every Yid to learn Rambam, on one level or another.

The advantages of Rambam are actually quite easy to explain to people. We just need to make it palatable. First of all, you have the opportunity to learn the entire Torah, and secondly, you have the opportunity to unite with the rest of the Jewish people. These are ideas that anyone can understand, even if they are not yet putting on Rabbeinu Tam's tefillin.

When these thoughts are presented and explained well, people are honored to join. Everyone loves to learn something new and everyone loves the idea of *achdus*, so it's an 'easy sell' — especially Sefer Hamitzvos for only a few minutes a day.

As a shliach at the central Chabad House in Johannesburg, I've always tried to push this campaign; I've encouraged many Yidden to learn Rambam and I bring them the resources they need to do it. Since the first years of the *takana*, we have made community *siyumim* and have made the effort to make it interesting for the *baalei batim*. For example, we've brought different speakers to talk about the different sides of the Rambam, who was a very interesting personality.

This past year, people have been holed up at home due to Covid-19. In response, we did a bigger push than usual. We started a campaign to encourage *frum* people to learn *shloshe perakim* and not-yet-*frum* to learn *perek echad* or Sefer Hamitzvos.

There are daily classes attracting quite a lot of people. Local shlichim chip in, taking turns to give a class. Even a number of non-Lubavitch rabbonim have joined the cycle. There are hundreds if not thousands of people on our WhatsApp group that learn Sefer Hamitzvos each day.

We always hear great feedback from people who join, whether Sefer Hamitzvos or more. Even though some sections of Rambam are more difficult than others, there's always something interesting that they had never learned before.

Modern technology has made all this easier. We used to have to send out flyers and so on, but now we just reach out on Whatsapp and Zoom — and although the current situation is not purely an advantage, we have many more participants than before.

Can learning *shloshe perakim* with mekuravim work?

Rabbi Mordechai Shain: Last year we were presented with a new challenge called coronavirus. As the Rebbe always taught us, every challenge is really an opportunity. Around that time, I noticed that we were about to begin the fortieth cycle of Rambam, which would conclude on Gimmel Tammuz. It brought back memories of the first cycle, which ended on Yud-Alef Nissan 5745*.



10 TEVES 5749

*📅 5745-1985,

Being that the people in my community were not leaving their homes, they had a lot more time on their hands, and I decided to establish a Rambam class for *shlosha perakim*. Don't get me wrong; this is really as crazy as it sounds. These are people who had never studied in a yeshiva format and had never even heard of learning Rambam.

I spoke to each individual personally and explained to them the significance of learning Rambam. Whoever committed to participate purchased a set of Rambam and signed a letter which I then brought to the Ohel.

There were two main points I told them. First of all, you get to be part of a cycle together with many other Jews. Secondly, the Rebbe said that the 83 *halachos* of Rambam are the *gematria* of *machalah* (illness), so by learning the *halachos* we bring healing to the world (see sidebar).

We began with 15 people, and I assumed that the group would shrink to half within a few weeks, but to my surprise and delight, that didn't happen. The number has been maintained very well. Some did find it too difficult and dropped out, but then others joined. Each day, we do an hour-long Zoom class, and afterwards I send the video and recording of the class to the entire group, in case someone wasn't able to participate in person. There is one fellow that went to South America for several months, and he listens to the recordings religiously.

I noticed something interesting. After we learned Avodah and Korbanos, some people asked us, "Why can't we build a *Beis Hamikdash*? The Rambam didn't write that we cannot build it!" They had never properly understood the idea of the *Beis Hamikdash*, and now they gained a whole new understanding. It gave me a new outlook on matters I've never learned before.

Another point: We learned through the 30 chapters of Hilchos Shabbos, and the participants discovered for the first time that the laws of Shabbos are so intricate — the *avos*, *toldos*, *shevus*, and so on. They were fascinated. "We never realized there was so much to Shabbos. Is this really what G-d wants?" They had never thought in those terms.

You know, when you climb a mountain, the top seems very close at first, but as you climb higher, you begin to realize just how far the destination really is. Learning Rambam gave my students a new appreciation for Torah learning. They finally began to appreciate the width and breadth of Torah. Now, they say, "Wow, the Rebbe knew the entire Rambam, the entire Talmud?" — They gained a new perspective of Torah knowledge, and they also gained a new

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appreciation for the Rebbe. This year, instead of my yearly dinner, we will be holding a grand *siyum*. The participants will be honorees, and we will invite their friends and family to join and hear their impressions from a year of learning Rambam.

In truth, learning *shlosha perakim* was a wild idea. But we are living in crazy times, so we need to do crazy things. *Perek echad* was good for regular times, but for this year, I felt it was an opportune time to do *shlosha perakim*. It has been a real commitment. There is no vacation, day in and day out. But it certainly has paid off; I know Rambam today better than ever before.

Rabbi Masinter: One lesson I learned from the virus is that things could go viral very quickly. The message I took from it is that we need to make the Rebbe's *mitvza* go viral quickly too. And the time was ripe — people were at home with so much time on their hands.

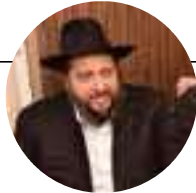
People were also interested and inspired on their own. You know, as we get closer to the revelation of Moshiach, people have the inner will to do the right thing. We don't need to convince people to get involved; we just need to dig a bit into their hearts.

What tools would you suggest to help a person learn Rambam properly each day?

Rabbi Lew: The Alter Rebbe said—as the Rebbe quoted countless times—that every person has a *mitzvah* to be *kovea itim*, to fix times to study Torah. However, he said that it is not merely a *kvius* in time, but a *kvius b'nefesh*, it has to be something that is fixed within your innermost self.

The first stage to be successful in Rambam is to decide that you want to do it, to mean it. All other tips and ideas are secondary; the first step is the firm decision to make it a part of your life. With that resolve,

The Rambam Cure



Rabbi Eli Silberstein, shliach in Ithaca, NY, relates:

Last year, I was diagnosed with cardiac arrhythmia, meaning that my heart was beating too fast. They did a test with a Holter monitor, a necklace-like device which monitors your heartbeat, and they discovered that my heart was beating between 20,000-40,000 extra times per day — an enormous amount.

The doctor was very concerned because extra heartbeats could have devastating consequences. He sent me to a specialist who scheduled me for an invasive procedure, where they go into the heart and burn the part of the muscle that might be the source of the problem.

Due to Covid-19, the procedure was postponed. Meanwhile, we marked the Siyum Harambam.

Now, there is a famous *sicha* where the Rebbe notes that the Rambam wrote 83 categories of *halachos*, and interestingly, there are also 83 categories of illness according to Gemara, corresponding to the *gematria* of the word *machalah*. In other words, the Rebbe said, learning these 83 *halachos* is the antidote to any illness that may befall a person.

I had always learned Rambam, but there had been times when I wasn't perfectly consistent; there were days that I missed. When I came across that *sicha*, I made a *hachlata* to become fully consistent in learning *shloscha perakim*.

Some time later, they rescheduled my surgery, and the doctor suggested doing another Holter-monitor test to see if there were any developments. He did the test, and the next day, he called me. "Are you sure you didn't do the procedure? You only had one extra heartbeat the entire day. In all my years of practice, I've never seen anything like it. It is medically inconceivable..."

you will be able to overcome the various obstacles that will appear before you.

I would also suggest a practical piece of advice to people who find difficulty with Rambam: Set a literal *kvius b'zman*, a time of day that is set aside for learning Rambam. Turn off your phone, tune the world out, and focus on Rambam.

Some people like to split up the *perakim*, while others like to learn everything early in the morning.

In the first years of the *takana*, there was a *bochur* who learned Rambam before davening, but his *mashpia* told him that it was inappropriate. He wrote to the Rebbe about it, and the Rebbe told him, "*yamshich*," continue learning in the morning.

In my understanding, the Rebbe was telling him that if those were the moments in his day that were his *kvius* in *zman* and *nefesh*, that was a worthy endeavor. (It should be noted that there is no halachic issue with learning basic *halacha* before davening.)

In 5746*, during the third cycle of Rambam, I happened to have a conversation with my old friend and colleague, Rabbi Shlomo Cunin. We were both in our forties with busy lives, so I asked him, "How are you doing with Rambam?"

"Of course," he exclaimed, "I never missed a day!"

He shared with me an amazing story.

One Friday night, he had hosted guests as usual, and the meal ended at a late hour. Afterwards, he took out his Rambam to learn the daily *shiur*, but he could not remember the daily *perakim*.

He was at a loss. He couldn't pick up the phone, and there was no one nearby to ask. He did remember, however, that the *shiur* was in Hilchos Tefillah. So he sat down and learned through the entire Hilchos Tefillah...

That's an example of dedication. There are all sorts of instances where it seems difficult to learn Rambam. Occasions like weddings, or even Tisha B'av, which in England can end at 10:30 p.m. On one occasion, I spent Yom Tov in Russia, and the hotel hallway was pitch-black, so I needed to lay down with my sefer on the floor near the exit light, to be able to learn Rambam before going to sleep.

Another point: The Rebbe once told me that Chassidus is available today in all languages. Rambam is now also available in countless ways, and has become an easier endeavor.

What tips would you recommend?

Rabbi Lew: I would suggest the following three ideas. One: Equip yourself with a Rambam with explanations or translations that will help you understand. Two: Having a *chavrusa* is very helpful. Three: For groups like yeshivos, the following idea could be very useful — in the yeshiva in London, one group of *bochurim* had a *seder* where a *bochur* prepared one *perek* to give over. Each day, *three* bochurim would

have their respective *perakim* at their fingertips, and they would give it over to the others.

Dr. Hecht: Everyone goes through the regular challenges of life, but normally, you don't forget to eat or drink. If something is important to you, you will find time to do it.

Every person needs to figure out how it works for them. I was once speaking in the Chicago Mesivta about all the various ways you could learn

Rambam—on the phone, on the treadmill, on a walk—when the *rosh yeshiva* Rabbi Eli Nossan Silberberg called out, “There is one more way—just sit down at a table and learn out of a *sefer!*”

For some years, in order to make sure that I finish Rambam on time, I have been splitting it up—one *perek* in the morning and one in the afternoon, so by evening I have only one *perek* left. Whenever I know that I will have less time in my day, I make sure to learn Rambam in the morning. When my children got married, I made sure to visit the mesivta in the morning and learn Rambam there before all the wedding frenzy began.

Rabbi Masinter: By human nature, when you don't do what you need to do, you get upset at yourself. That's the simplest motivation—you will feel good and accomplished knowing that you have fulfilled the Rebbe's wishes and learned Rambam properly every day. You will feel better about yourself, and it will have a positive impact on every other aspect of your life.

More Than A Chavrusa

Rabbi Eli Rosenfeld, Shliach in Portugal relates: As we were about to begin this past cycle of Rambam in the heart of Covid, myself and a dear friend, Rabbi Levi Wolvovsky, shliach in Florence, Italy, took on a *hachlata* to learn three *prakim* of Rambam together over Zoom each day.

Being that there are Yidden in our communities who would enjoy the opportunity of seeing two rabbis learning together in a yeshiva type setting, we decided to tell others about it as well. Although we are learning as a Chavrusa one on one, they are invited to join the Zoom and listen in.

It is a privilege to share that eight months later, there are a number of Yidden who have joined every day since the beginning in merit of our daily Zoom, including a Yid in a small Portuguese town, three hours drive from Lisbon. ואתם תלוקטו לאחד אחד בני ישראל.



SIYUM HARAMBAM BY THE RAMBAM'S TZIYUN, 5745

LIBRARY OF AGUDAS CHASSIDEI CHABAD

A Life Around Rambam

Rabbi Bentzion Butman, shliach to Cambodia relates:

In recent months, I began learning *shlosa perakim* with my 11 and 13-year-old sons every morning. People always ask me if my children actually understand; in fact, they understand much more than I expected. The Rebbe would repeat a story about someone who brought his baby to the *siyum* on Erev Pesach. When asked why he brought a child who doesn't understand, the man replied, "And the adults do understand?"

Rambam can be a challenge for anyone, as it was for me when I pushed it off until the time for *krias Shema*. Setting a morning time and learning it with my children makes a huge difference. Children demand explanations, so you are forced to learn it better yourself. My children even remind me of concepts that I myself forgot.

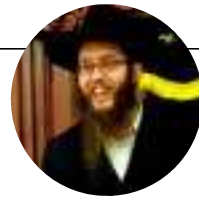
My whole house revolves around Rambam. Before Yom Kippur, my children made sure to remind me that there was very little time on Yom Kippur, so we planned ahead of time to learn it before Shacharis. Some time ago, my son came to me all concerned, "Tatty, I have something important to talk about." I prepared myself for a tough conversation, and he said, "We are about

to begin Sefer Taharah. Are you sure we will be able to do it? You always say it will be too difficult" (whenever one of the kids would say that a certain *halacha* was difficult, I would tell them, "just wait for Taharah"), so now he was worried.

The impact is not only on my children; Rambam has made a big difference for me as well. Every *chavrusa* makes the learning more serious and gives it a strong foundation. My learning has now become a *kvius b'nefesh*, not only a *kvius b'zman*.

It has also given me a powerful connection with my children. I now spend hours with them, and the time is qualitatively different; it revolves around Torah, the Rebbe's *takana*, and it has totally transformed our relationship. Even the mundane conversations in our home have a tinge of Torah to them.

Another important aspect is the impact it had on my shlichus. From the beginning of my years on shlichus, I have noticed that my success is directly connected to my learning Rambam. When I learn better, my situation is better. This year, when I have been learning Rambam better than ever before, I have had a lot of *hatzlacha*, *baruch Hashem*.



The Rebbe would often say that when we create the vessel b'ruchniyus through learning Torah, we can receive all physical brachos. Can you share anything on this topic?

Rabbi Lew: I once spoke to a group of high school girls, and challenged them to learn Rambam for one year. "It's difficult," I told them, "but it will elevate your life to a higher plane." A year later, I received a letter from one of those girls.

"Thank you for your advice," she wrote to me. "I followed your suggestion, and it has uplifted every area of my life."

Learning Rambam is not a burden of rocks; it's a burden of diamonds. It transforms every part of you and every aspect of your *avodas Hashem*. You become a bigger *lamdan*, a better Chossid, and a better person.

Rabbi Shain: I've been on shlichus for 27 years. I have seen time and time again that the vessel for physical *parnasa* is fulfilling the Rebbe's *takanos* of Chitas and Rambam. I've seen it in a literal way in my life. When you do your shlichus and also fulfill the Rebbe's *takanos*, the sustenance comes *biderech memeleih*.

As a *mashal*, I like to tell people the following factoid: Everyone knows that big fish eat small fish. However, they usually don't catch the fish they chase after; instead, they end up eating the fish that swim mistakenly into their mouths. We know this because when fish are cut open, the small fish in the stomach

LEARNING RAMBAM IS NOT A BURDEN OF ROCKS; IT'S A BURDEN OF DIAMONDS. IT TRANSFORMS EVERY PART OF YOU AND EVERY ASPECT OF YOUR AVODAS HASHEM.

are usually facing the inside, meaning they swam in head first, unintentionally.

Often, we chase big fish and hope that that's where we'll find our success, but ultimately, the real source is keeping with the Rebbe's *takanos*. When we put our energy into doing whatever the Rebbe expects of us, the Rebbe takes care of us, even though it may come through the sources that are least expected.

But beyond physical sustenance, Rambam has changed me spiritually too. Spending hours a day preparing and delivering a class in Rambam has changed me entirely, even in unrelated aspects. I find myself writing to the Rebbe much more often; I've simply begun to feel closer to the Rebbe. **T**

1. It should be noted that the following are words of inspiration shared in the spirit of a farbrengen. For an overview of what the Rebbe said about learning Rambam, the reasons for, and importance of, the *takana*, and much more, see the other articles published in previous editions on this subject: *Every Yid, Every Halacha, Every Day*, Derher Tishrei 5777. *The Global Initiative*, Derher Shevat 5774.

2. See Likkutei Sichos vol. 29, p. 332.



A Special Answer

Rabbi Moshe Katzman, shliach to Staten Island relates:

It was late night Sukkos 5752*. I was walking on Kingston Avenue when I bumped into Rabbi Shmuel Lew, and we spoke. I shared with him that though I received answers from the Rebbe, I felt they were “general” answers. I had a strong desire for direct guidance, the likes of which older shluchim had received in earlier years.

In that period, the Rebbe didn't respond to every question and request. In general, the Rebbe had been encouraging people to ask questions to their rav and *mashpia* but I still felt a strong desire that I should be *zoche* for this opportunity. This was a *Chassidisher yetzer hara* that many of us younger shluchim had.

Rabbi Lew asked me, “What about Rambam? Do you learn every day?”

I was honest about it; I generally learned Rambam, but I wasn't particularly consistent, and I did miss Rambam on occasion.

Hearing that, Rabbi Lew gave me a piece of advice. “Learn Rambam every day without fail, and the Rebbe will answer you.”

I decided to take his advice and made a firm decision to learn every day.

At the time, we were at a *parshas derachim* — we were at a point where we had to make a difficult choice between two paths in our shlichus. Both were complicated with various challenges.

Of course, I followed the Rebbe's directive and discussed this with my *mashpia* and with the senior members of Tzach, who oversee the *peulos* of shluchim in New York.

The guidance I received was not what I felt comfortable with but I had done as I was supposed to. Now, I approached *mazkirus* and asked them to write a note to the Rebbe on my behalf with all the ins and outs of the issue. At first, they told me that I should just ask for a *bracha* in doing as I was guided, but I insisted that I wanted to ask the Rebbe about this.

I wrote about the issue, including the advice I had received from my rav and Tzach. To my surprise and delight, I received a very clear answer from the Rebbe — where he pointed out a problem with their suggestion and recommended that I speak with *yedidim mevinim*. The outcome turned out to be entirely different than I had been advised previously.

I felt that this special *zechus* that I merited was a direct result of my *hachlata* to learn Rambam properly.