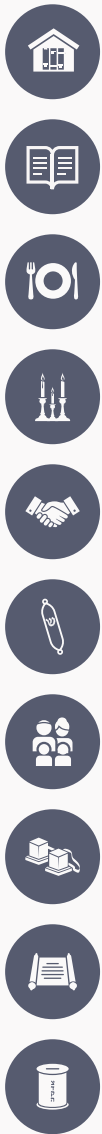


BY: RABBI MENDEL JACOBS

נדפס ע"י ולזכות
הרה"ת ר' שרגא פייוול
וזוגתו מרת דבורה לאה
ומשפחתם שיחיו
מאן

MIVTZA TORAH



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Spread the Words

Mivtza Torah: To ensure that each and every Jew learns Torah as much as possible, at the very least, a few minutes each day. "Torah protects and saves..."

...Best would be to try and influence each one to learn sections of Torah by heart, which will always remain in their memory, thereby ensuring that words of Torah are always etched in their minds...¹

With these words, the Rebbe formulated what "Mivtza Torah" actually means.

As was the case with several of the Rebbe's *mitzvot*, the initiative was connected to the security situation in Eretz Yisroel. In the months following the Yom Kippur War, the Rebbe had noted that the Israeli soldiers themselves were asking for substantive ways to boost their morale.² In response, the Rebbe urged Chassidim to assist them with Torah and *mitzvos*, especially those connected with Torah, Tefilla, and Tzedaka.

We Want Your Soul!

Eleven years later, in a series of impassioned *sichos*, the Rebbe again urged everyone to renew their commitment to this *mivtza*. The Rebbe said:

When you meet a Jew in the street, you must ask him whether he already has a set time to study Torah. If he already does, then you must influence him to increase the amount he studies. Best would be to encourage him to give his own Torah class to others as well. If, for whatever reason, *chas v'shalom*, he does not yet have a set time to study Torah, you must try, in a heartfelt manner, to get him to start learning Torah.

...On that note, it's important to make clear:

When you approach a Yid to speak with him about setting a time to study, you shouldn't connect it with anything else. Don't ask him about his conduct in other areas of Torah and *mitzvos*, whether he fulfills *mitzvos* scrupulously (*b'hiddur*), in the best manner (*l'chatchila*), or merely getting by (*b'dieved*). The only thing you should tell him is that as a son of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, and as a daughter of Sara, Rivka, Rachel, and Leah... he should go study Hashem's Torah!

Don't ask him about his background, don't ask him for his passport... and certainly don't ask him for money (unless he offers it on his own). You are asking one thing of him: "*Ten li hanefesh!*" Give me your soul! Sit and learn



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Torah! The Torah is our life and the length of our days. Hashem says, “If only the Jewish people would... as long as they keep my Torah!”³ No matter where a person is holding, Hashem wants him to study Torah!

This is also the answer to all those who argue that Torah must be studied in purity and so on: Hashem himself says, “If only... they would keep my Torah.” The study of Torah itself will bring him closer to all areas of Yiddishkeit!⁴

Teach Aleph!

Another element of Mivtza Torah that the Rebbe insisted is applicable to each and every person is to strengthen public *shiurim* in Torah.

“Not everyone has the talent to address a full crowd and teach Torah in public,” the Rebbe explained. “However, if you engage in Mivtza Torah, you can persuade another person to come and join an already existing Torah class.⁵

Furthermore, the Rebbe said, since we are in the final days before Moshiach, every person must share whatever knowledge they have.

There are those who argue: How can you tell me to get involved in Mivtza Torah, when I myself only know a single chapter, or a single letter? It’s not my fault—I am a *tinok shenishba bein ha’akum*, but the bottom line is that I don’t have any knowledge, so how can you expect me to get involved in Mivtza Torah?!

[We say to him:] Listen! There is no time! Moshiach is coming soon! Run out to the street and study Torah with someone! If you only know ‘one chapter,’ then learn ‘one chapter’ with him!

Even if you only know ‘one teaching, or even one letter’—you were taught how to read the Aleph-Beis, and all you know is the shape of an Aleph—then go out and shout ‘Aleph!’ You will surely meet someone who doesn’t know what an Aleph is, and you will be able to explain it to him!

“But,”—this person argues—“What will the other person gain from knowing what an Aleph is?!”

No! You will begin with Aleph, and it’s possible that this will be all; but because you gave him ‘one letter’ of Torah, it will blossom into ‘one chapter,’ and before long into a tremendous amount of Torah.”⁶

Mivtza Torah and Moshiach

When enumerating the qualities of Moshiach, the Rambam lists that he will be “*hoge'h b'Torah*”—one who diligently contemplates Torah. It would seem that Moshiach’s main quality would be as a ruler and king; why is his proficiency in Torah so important?

The reason is that Melech HaMoshiach will have the ability to redeem the Jewish people and take them out of *galus*, stemming from his toiling in Torah, making his very “being” one of Torah. As such, he will have the power to override the limitations of this world, since the “Torah was created before the world,” and it transcends the world. He will therefore “compel all of the Jewish people to walk in (the way of the Torah) and rectify the breaches in its observance,” followed by the rebuilding of the Beis Hamikdash and gathering in the exiles of the Jewish people, may it be *teikef umiyad mamash*.⁷

REB NACHUM MARKOWITZ RECEIVES
KOS SHEL BRACHA FROM THE REBBE.



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FIVE MINUTES

On the importance of studying Torah every day, even if only a small amount, Reb Nachum Markowitz relates:

As a *bochur*, Nachum wasn’t excited about learning. Instead, he worked for the Shmira-patrol, driving around and ensuring the safety of the Crown Heights neighborhood. As is known, the safety of Crown Heights was very important to the Rebbe, and he felt that this would be a good way for him to spend his time.

Once, in *yechidus* with the Rebbe, he wrote about his occupation and that he does not feel inclined to learn so much. He wrote clearly that although he knows he should be learning, he lacks interest and avoids it, adding that this lack of interest bothers him.

The Rebbe told him as follows (in *Lashon Hakodesh*): “You should continue to work in the patrol in this neighborhood, and you should set times for learning, in *Torah Shebiksav* and in *Torah Shebaal Peh*. In *Torah Shebiksav*—learn the parsha of the week, and in *Torah Shebaal Peh* [at this point the Rebbe picked up his head]—learn whatever you want. The main thing is that these set times shouldn’t be more than five minutes! And from time to time, add a fifth [twenty percent, i.e., one extra minute].

Reb Nachum relates how this *hora’a* was life-changing for him; he would often finish the five minutes in the middle of an interesting question or topic, but as per the Rebbe’s instructions, he would not continue. This made him think about the learning all day until he could finally learn the answer or continue the next day.



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Conquering the World—One World at a Time



Interview with Rabbi Shloime Wolvovsky

By: Rabbi Bentzion Pearson

Please share a little bit about yourself and how you began this journey of sharing Torah with others.

I grew up in Crown Heights, and I've lived there almost all of my life. Although my *parnassa* came primarily from business, as a chossid, I always sought opportunities to be involved in *mitzvoim* and help fellow Yidden with Torah and *mitzvos*.

Naturally, the first place I turned was to my immediate contacts, whether from my business or local people I knew from the Crown Heights community. This evolved into setting up times to learn Torah with people, some regularly, others less so. Slowly but surely, my weekly schedule became filled with study sessions.

About two years ago, I decided that the time had come to turn this from a passion project into a more structured program. I launched a project called “Karnei Ohr (karneiohr.org),” making myself available to those who wish to learn and would appreciate more Torah in their life.

I firmly believe, both from what we know and learn in the Rebbe's *sichos*, as well as what I've learned from my experience, that *limud haTorah* cannot be approached as a top-down obligation; something that we *must* do. It's very difficult to bring a fellow Yid to commit to Torah learning with that approach.

Torah needs to be a transformative experience.

The Yid needs to see how the Torah is a vitalizing force in his life, both personal and professional. When they appreciate the wisdom of Torah and how it applies in their life, how it fosters their own growth and illuminates their life-journey, it's altogether different. A person will be much more receptive to it and will stay committed over the long haul.

This is what I try to do with the people I learn with. I started with a core group of regulars; some are in-town, others are out-of-town, and I learn with them over Zoom. They are at varying levels of *frumkeit*; some more, some less. Some are even friends I've known for many years, who were educated in *yeshivos* just like me.

Currently, I'm learning and spending time with some twenty individuals each week.

I say “spending time” because sometimes it's a formal learning session over a *sefer*, and sometimes we're having a conversation. We'll discuss what's on their mind, what's been happening in their lives, and we'll try to find the Torah perspective.

That's really beautiful! Can you share some examples of the impact that Torah learning has had on some of the people you're in touch with?

It's very encouraging when I hear meaningful feedback from the people I'm learning with.

Some time ago, I approached a fellow community member in Crown Heights and offered to learn with him. He readily agreed. When I asked him what he wanted to learn, he told me that he'd like to learn Chassidus. This is someone who went through the regular Chabad yeshiva system, so his choice came as no surprise to me.

When we sat down to learn for the first time, he explained to me that as his children are growing up, he really wants them to appreciate what we have as Chabad Chassidim. There's no way he could convey that without learning Chassidus.

So, learn we did.

We started learning a *maamar* together each week, and after six or eight sessions, we completed a full *maamar*. At that moment, I looked up at his face and noticed a special excitement. He was beaming! I asked him, "What's this all about?" and he confided in me: "What do you mean? This is the first time in my life that I completed a full *maamar* from beginning to end..."

That moment was incredibly eye-opening for me. I realized that one need not look very far to have an impact with Torah learning. Your friend, your next-door neighbor, the person you daven with in shul; any of them might be waiting for a boost in their Torah learning, and so it's truly special to be able to serve them in such a meaningful way.

I've seen time and again: when you learn Torah with another person, whether a *sicha*, *Tanya*, or anything else, it could become like life-giving oxygen for them. It could help them see their life in a whole new light and address the exact issues and challenges they're dealing with at the moment.

Not long ago, I was introduced to an individual who comes from a frum background but has drifted away over the years. I realized soon after we met that the Yiddishkeit he grew up with was presented to him in a dry way,

and perhaps that had soured his experience.

We started to learn, but we kept the setting casual. We would have many informal discussions, as opposed to a strict, text-based study. Very often, we would talk about *mitzvos*, and I tried to give a Chassidus-based perspective on their meaning.

At one session, he asked me, "Next time we get together, can we talk about the meaning behind tefillin?" Of course, I agreed, and we indeed had an interesting discussion about tefillin at our next Zoom session.

As we begin our session the following week, he tells me excitedly, "I want to let you know that since we spoke last time about tefillin, I've been putting them on every day!"

Imagine that! What learning Torah can accomplish in a Yid's life; it can be absolutely transformative!

Wow! Those are indeed incredible stories. What is it specifically about Torah learning that makes such a deep impact on our lives?

We all know the Rebbe's famous words about *Mivtza Torah*, that the goal is: "*Einmemmen di velt durch limud haTorah*"—to conquer the world with Torah study. I believe that the Rebbe was also referring to the "*olam katan zeh ha'adam*"—every person is like a miniature world. The Rebbe wants us to transform the perspective and worldview of each and every person through a meaningful Torah-learning experience. And we see it happening every day.

The Rebbe said countless times that our Torah is "*Toras Chaim—hora'ah bachaim*"—a Torah of life, which provides guidance for life. When the Torah is a living Torah, presented as something truly part of our lives and giving us life, the effect is unparalleled.

Torah needs to be seen in this light. We may have gone through yeshiva; we may have even received *semicha*. We might even



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be learning Torah regularly. However, the question ought to be asked: Are we benefiting and being vitalized by the Torah to the degree available to us?

The Rebbe records in *Hayom Yom*⁸ that the Baal Shem Tov used to travel for three reasons, one of them being to spread *pnimiyus haTorah*. The Mittlerer Rebbe explained:

The revealed part of Torah is compared to water, while the hidden part of Torah is compared to fire. Water attracts; everyone comes to it on their own. But fire is scary; people don't gravitate to it naturally. With his travels, the Baal Shem Tov showed that Chassidus is not something to be afraid of. If we want to spread Chassidus, the Mittlerer Rebbe concludes, we need to go directly to our potential students and show them that it's not scary. It's fire, but it's a G-dly fire. It's not a fire of destruction, *chas v'shalom*. It's a fire of warmth and love.

I believe that in this *Hayom Yom*, the Rebbe is teaching us to be proactive in showing our fellow Yidden how meaningful Torah, especially Chassidus, can be for them. It can be transformative, in a very positive way.

Can you share with us how exactly this project started and how it has grown over the years?

My project started organically, and it was a smaller part of my weekly schedule. However, as time progressed, the project grew BH beyond its original boundaries. Through reach-out, invitations, and referrals, I was delivering several shiurim and quite a few chavrusas every week.

While my primary focus has been working with men, throughout this time I've encouraged my wife—who teaches Chassidus at BRHS—to develop her own initiative for women. Baruch Hashem, for over five years now, she has been hosting a weekly “Lunch & Learn” for women. Each year, the class explores a different theme—such as *Bitachon*, *Tanya*, or *Tefillah*. The shiur is consistently well attended, and participants often share how it serves as a source of spiritual oxygen—empowering them in their roles as Chassidische women, wives, mothers, and community members.

At a certain point, I realized it was time to formalize this. So, I set up a non-profit (501c3) organization, which presented the opportunity for

friends and acquaintances to partner with me in this project.

Some of the people I study with opt in for a financial commitment. It's not simply about compensation—it reflects a deeper level of dedication and shared investment in their own growth. This commitment helps ensure that our learning is consistent, focused, and truly impactful. It also allows me to devote the time and attention needed to build and nurture meaningful learning relationships with more individuals.

It's been two years since I jumped in and took on this project full-time. It's been a truly special journey, *baruch Hashem*, and I'm grateful for every step along the way.

Can you share with us more about your own journey through this project and the effect that it had on you personally?

A significant impetus and inspiration for getting involved in all of this has been my listening to the Rebbe's farbrengens. The Rebbe always brings each idea home with such clarity, never leaving anything in the air. One constant in the Rebbe's words is how we must truly live Torah and allow it to guide us every single day. This is what I try to convey to the people I learn with. And I hope my words resonate with them as well.

The ideas that I've learned over the years have been transformative in my own life: whether it was learning how to have true *bitachon* in Hashem even during difficult times,

or how to see and recognize *hashgacha pratis* in our everyday lives, and so on. I realized that when Torah is approached properly, especially Chassidus, it empowers us to live on a much higher level.

I've learned to appreciate that it's a process; it takes time. But eventually, the shift happens, and a person realizes the tremendous opportunity to live and be enlivened by Torah learning.

This is especially true of the Rebbe's Torah, which is tailor-made for our generation, and which addresses so many of the challenges that we face today in such a clear and lucid fashion. There's nothing quite like it.

There's a *sicha*⁹ where the Rebbe draws a lesson from *Arei Miklat*; that every Yid needs to be like a sign pointing and guiding others in the right direction. But as a human being, you need to be a "living sign"; you can't just remain dormant. You can't wait until people come to you looking for guidance. You need to step out of your comfort zone, reach out to others *where they are*, and offer them the guidance and direction they may not even know they need.

It's up to us to be that guiding light for our fellow Jews. The Torah is their inheritance—"Morasha kehillas Yaakov." All we need to do is present it to them in a relatable and relevant way, and their hearts will be open to learn and absorb.

The Rebbe says we must "conquer the world" with Torah. Let's start by influencing one "small" world at a time.

1 Shabbos Parshas Bamidbar 5734; Likkutei Sichos vol. 13, p. 212.

2 See *Bayis Malei Seforim* entry of this column, Derher Kislev 5786.

3 In the *sicha*, the Rebbe said that he doesn't want to mention the actual quote from the Midrash, as it has negative connotations.

4 Shabbos Bereishis 5745; Hisvaaduyos 5745 vol. 1, p. 461.

5 Shabbos Parshas Beshalach 5742; Hisvaaduyos 5742 vol. 2, p. 823.

6 Motzei Shabbos Parshas Bamidbar 5739; Sichos Kodesh 5739 vol. 2, p. 720.

7 Likkutei Sichos vol. 35, p. 205.

8 16 Av.

9 Likkutei Sichos vol. 2, p. 363.

