



לזכות
החייל בצבאות ה'
יהושע בנימין הלוי שיחי'
לרגל הולדתו
ח' אלול ה'תשע"ז
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וזוגתו מרת חנה שיחיו
בייטעלמאן



Brightening Our Lives

Tanya—Torah Shebiksav of Chassidus

ספר התניא הוא ספר התורה שבכתב בתורת חסידות
חב"ד, אשר לא לבד שכל פתגם ופתגם הוא מדויק
ומכוון, אלא אף כל מלה ומלה היא מדויקת בחסר ויתיר.

הוד כ"ק אבותינו רבותינו הקדושים זצוקללה"ה נבג"מ
זי"ע והחסידים הראשונים וזקני החסידים שבכל דור
ודור התייחסו לספר התניא ע"ד אותה הדרת הקדש
שמתייחסים לספר החומש.

The Tanya is the "The Written Torah" of Chassidus Chabad.
Not only is every concept precise and deliberate, but every
single word is as well, to the last letter.

Our holy Rebbeim and the first Chassidim, as well as the elder
Chassidim in each generation, treated a Tanya with the same
reverence that is reserved for a Chumash.

(אג"ק אדמו"ר הריי"ץ ח"ג עמ' רסא)

"אליכם אישים אקרא"

"I call to you," the Alter Rebbe begins the introduction to Tanya. "...I speak of those who know me well, each and every member of *anash* who lives in our country and in lands nearby, with whom words of affection have been frequently exchanged, and who have revealed to me all the secrets of their hearts and minds in *avodas Hashem*...

"All of these [*kuntreisim*] are responses to many questions that *anash* in our country have constantly asked, seeking advice and guidance in *avodas Hashem*.

"...You will no longer press for admission to speak with me in *yechidus*. For in these [writings] you will find peace for your soul, and true counsel

on every matter that you find difficult in *avodas Hashem*...”

Powerful words.

With this introduction, the Alter Rebbe made studying Tanya a very personal experience for every single person.

When one learns Tanya, he becomes “an acquaintance” of the Alter Rebbe, allowing the Alter Rebbe to illuminate his path in life, and to show him how *avodas Hashem* is accessible (קרוב אליך הדבר מאד) to each and every person, as the Alter Rebbe writes on the *shaar blat*.¹

The spiritual power of Tanya is so great that it required the Alter Rebbe to have real *mesirus nefesh* to reveal its content.

The Tzemach Tzedek compared this to the *mesirus nefesh* of Avraham Avinu: He threw himself into the furnace to spread *Elokus*, although he knew this may spell the end of his legacy and the ability to give birth to the chosen people! His *mesirus nefesh* completely defied logic.

Likewise, when the Alter Rebbe began teaching the *maamarim* of the Tanya in the year תקמ”ב, he knew that the Satan was unequivocally against it. If fact, it was specifically in that time that the troubles from the *misnagdim* became truly unbearable.

When he taught these *maamarim* again in the year תק”ן—he literally put his life on the line (which was ultimately exchanged with the life of his daughter Devorah Leah, who passed away three years later²). He continued the *mesirus nefesh* by compiling the Tanya and having it printed, until the matter finally took a toll on the Alter Rebbe himself, sending him to jail for 53 days—one day for each of the 53 *perakim* of Tanya.

With his great sacrifice, the Alter Rebbe merited that anyone who will study the Tanya will awaken the innermost part of his *neshama*—the איתן שבנשמה (literally: the strength of the *neshama*). For “תניא” has the same letters as the word “איתן.”³

Tanya First

Throughout the generations, our Rebbeim have taught us that the Tanya stands as the foundation of the teachings of Chassidus, and even the very foundation of how we live our lives as Yidden.



AN EARLY PRINT OF TANYA, LVOV 5618.

Once, when speaking of the Alter Rebbe’s two main *sefarim*—the Tanya and the Shulchan Aruch—the Rebbe made a fascinating observation:

It would seem that the most appropriate order of studying these two *sefarim* would be: first the Shulchan Aruch, where one learns how to wake up in the morning, wash hands, daven, etc., and only then the Tanya, where we learn about the inner meaning of serving Hashem properly.

But in truth, perhaps it could be said that studying Tanya comes first! Because even before washing hands in the morning, we say “*Modeh Ani*,” which talks about *emunah* in Hashem—something we learn about in Tanya. We also say “*chai v’kayam*,” that Hashem recreates the world constantly, and “*melech*,”

that Hashem is our king and we have to serve Him.
All of these subjects are covered in Tanya!⁴

WOMEN AND CHILDREN

At three different occasions, the Rebbe personally handed out Tanyas to thousands of men, women, and children: Yud-Aleph Nissan 5742, Yud Shevat 5750, and Yud-Tes Kislev 5751. (On Yud-Aleph Nissan 5744 the Rebbe also distributed Tanyas to all, but not personally—it was through the members of the *kolel*.)

Before that first *chaluka* in 5742, the Rebbe explained that he will be giving Tanyas to men and women alike—as women are equally obligated to study this *sefer*. Because Tanya teaches a person how to have *ahava* and *yira*—mitzvos that are incumbent upon men and women without distinction.

Moreover, the Rebbe pointed out how Tanya is applicable to children as well: The Frierdiker Rebbe related that when he started learning the letters of the Aleph-Beis, it was out of a *sefer* Tanya!

(*Toras Menachem* 5742 vol. 3, p. 1245-6.)

Tanya Every Day

After the Alter Rebbe was released from prison on Yud-Tes Kislev, Chassidim instituted that every person should learn one *perek* of Tanya per week, completing all 53 *perakim* in a year—similar to the way we complete the entire Torah every year.⁵

Often, the Rebbe spoke of a custom that many Chassidim had to study a *perek* of Tanya each morning before davening.⁶

It is unbecoming of a Chossid (“עס פאסט נישט”) not to learn a *perek* of Tanya every day, the Frierdiker Rebbe says.⁷

Eventually in 5703, the Frierdiker Rebbe divided the entire Tanya into daily lessons (part of the *shiurim* of *Chitas*). He explained:

The primary objective of the daily lesson in Tanya is not necessarily to have a deep understanding of the subject; rather, it is to simply say and learn words of Tanya every day. Also, it is important to take away two points from each day’s lesson and “live” with those concepts throughout the day.⁸



PRINTING OF THE TANYA ACROSS THE SUEZ CANAL DURING THE YOM KIPPUR WAR IN 5734, AS PER SPECIAL INSTRUCTION OF THE REBBE.

In many letters and *sichos*, the Rebbe repeatedly emphasized the importance of studying Tanya and the positive effect it will have on our lives.

“You ask whether you should learn Tanya with your friend who doesn’t understand the meaning of it,” the Rebbe writes in a letter. “I am shocked that you could write such words! This is certainly entirely out of place and inappropriate. True, the [Frierdiker] Rebbe writes that it is indeed difficult



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to fully understand the depth in the words of Tanya; nevertheless, in the same *reshima* he writes that even the simplest of people can understand it somewhat... You only need to learn with *simcha* and gladness of the heart—and you'll surely be successful.”⁹

Not at the Expense of Tanya!

There was a *bochur* in Tomchei Temimim in Lubavitch who was not well and, by doctor's orders, needed to exercise every day to improve his health.

The *mashgiach* asked the Rebbe Rashab when would be the best time to allow him time off *sefer*. He thought that perhaps the evening *sefer* of Tanya would be a good time, because the Tanya is constantly reviewed anyway and he wouldn't be missing new material. The Rebbe Rashab was unequivocally opposed to the idea:

“Let him take time off from any other *sefer*—be it *nigleh* or Chassidus,” the Rebbe Rashab said. “Studying Tanya is too important to miss.”

(Heard from Reb Dov Ber Yaffe.)

It's All In the Name

When you think about it, the name “Tanya” is seemingly a strange name that doesn't really articulate what the *sefer* is about at all. It's merely the first word of the *sefer* that means “We learned [in a *Beraisa*].”

By beginning with the word “Tanya,” the Alter Rebbe is teaching us a very important lesson:

True, the main objective of the *sefer* is to bring about *ahava* and *yira* within the student. But the name Tanya suggests that the “learning” of this *sefer* has value in and of itself! That's why the *sefer* is called Tanya!

There are Chassidim who think that they already know the Tanya well enough, and now it's time for them to move on and learn other *sefarim* of Chassidus.

But the truth is, Tanya is the “*Torah Shebiksav*” of Chassidus and it needs to be constantly studied and restudied. Even the first *perakim* that we seem to already know by heart.¹⁰

1. Likutei Sichos vol. 26, p. 38.
2. See Likutei Diburim 20 Kislev 5693.
3. Sefer Hasichos 5703, p. 59.
4. Shabbos Parshas Va'eira 5744; Toras Menachem 5744 vol. 2, p. 786.
5. Kitzurim V'haoros L'Tanya, p. 123.
6. See sichas Shabbos Parshas Acharei 5749; Toras Menachem 5749 vol. 3, p. 67, 75.
7. Sefer Hasichos Summer 5700, p. 144.
8. Sefer Hasichos 5705, p. 79.
9. Igros Kodesh vol. 16, p. 84.
10. Shabbos Parshas Bamidbar 5750; Toras Menachem 5750 vol. 3, p. 246.