

HOW TO STUDY TORAH (Part I)

written by Chaim Kramer
December 2, 2021



Don't be frightened or discouraged by how much there is to learn. Even if you forget what you've studied, don't despair!

Attempt to go through all the sacred books in the course of your lifetime. You will then have visited every place in the Torah. When reaching the World to Come you will be able to boast about your many "travels" and "journeys," just like all the jet-setters who are always talking about the exotic places they've visited. By studying *all* the books of Torah, you will be able to say, "I was in this book, I spent time in that set of writings" (*Rebbe Nachman's Wisdom* #28).

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Our Sages taught that in the World to Come a person will remember whatever he studied. Learn to see yourself as the day laborer who is paid to pour water into barrels which have holes. If he is foolish, he says, "Why waste my time?" But the wise man says, "I'm paid by the day. What difference is it to me if the barrels fill up or not? They're paying me to pour water." So too, the person who studies Torah is rewarded for the time he spends studying, not for what he remembers (*Rebbe Nachman's Wisdom* #26; see VaYikra Rabbah 19:2).

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Torah study is absolutely and unquestionably great. In fact, "It is your life..." (Deuteronomy 30:20). (Were this not so, we wouldn't face so many obstacles while trying to fulfill this most important mitzvah.) It is important to recognize the supreme value of Torah study and to be aware that there are barriers which must be overcome by anyone wishing to enter the wondrous and majestic world of Torah.

Through prayer. Someone asked Rebbe Nachman's advice about a certain devotion in serving God. The Rebbe told him to study Torah. When the man objected, "But I do not know how to learn!" the Rebbe answered, "Pray! With prayer, everything becomes possible. The greatest goal can be achieved through prayer" (*Likutey Moharan* II, 111).



“Pray! With prayer, everything becomes possible!” – Rebbe Nachman

The first step in Torah study is praying for it. Pray to God, plead with Him, beg Him to allow you the privilege of studying Torah and plead with Him to help you understand what you study. As Rebbe Nachman teaches: One must cry and pray very hard to get to understand Torah (*Likutey Moharan I, 21:8*).

The Rebbe himself did this. When he began to study the Mishnah, he found it impossible to understand. He wept and wept, until he was able to comprehend it by himself. Later, when he studied the Talmud, the same thing happened. Again he cried bitterly until he was worthy of understanding. This was even true of such esoteric studies as the Zohar and the writings of the Ari. Understanding only came after he had prayed, pleaded and cried (*Rebbe Nachman’s Wisdom: His Praises #8*).

(taken from the book [**Crossing the Narrow Bridge: A Practical Guide to Rebbe Nachman’s Teachings**](#); chapter 7 – Torah Study)