

HOW TO STUDY TORAH (PART II)

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“What people don’t realize is that these books are of no significance unless they look into them and study their teachings!” – Rebbe Nachman

Effort and diligence. Rebbe Nachman was once discussing the printing of Torah books, which in his time had become much more prevalent. Everybody was buying books to have in their homes. He said: Our Sages taught that a time will come when the Torah will be forgotten among Jews (*Shabbat* 138b). Therefore, many books are printed and bought, with people building up their own libraries. Since even the simplest laborer has books, the Torah is not forgotten. But what people don’t realize is that these books are of no significance unless they look into them and study their teachings (*Rebbe Nachman’s Wisdom* #18).

Thus, the second step in Torah study is commitment and effort. You have to keep at it. It is not enough to buy the books and display them on bookshelves. Devotion and diligence are absolutely necessary. One of the most important keys to diligence is the setting of realistic goals. It is good to have short-term goals and long-term goals, but above all is the need for them to be feasible. Aiming for what is possible builds enthusiasm; reaching for the impossible destroys it.

Once you've determined the right goals for your Torah study, remember: you've got to stick to them, no matter what. Be determined and make every effort to keep up with your studies daily. If you're delayed and can't manage to finish the amount you intended to cover, or, as sometimes happens to even the most committed person, your day's schedule is upset, then finish at night – that night. No matter how late before you finish, no matter how exhausted you are, do it. It's still better than falling behind and leaving today's learning for tomorrow. Knowing that you're committed to doing this is, in itself, very beneficial. When you know that you're going to have to stay up very late in order to finish your daily studies (especially after a few rough nights), you're going to make sure to be on time, or even early, for your regular studies.

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Even with commitment and devotion, there are times when your normal daily goals cannot be met. On certain days, like Yom Kippur and Purim when everyone is busy with prayer and the mitzvot of the day, it becomes impossible to carry a full load of learning. The same is true of the out-of-the-ordinary days when you've got to travel somewhere, or marry off a child and the like. In such cases, the best thing to do is what Reb Noson himself did. Reb Noson designed different study plans for different days. Thus, for example, the amount of Codes he

would undertake to study would depend upon what that day's schedule would allow; so much for a weekday, so much for a Friday, so much for Shabbat, so much for a festival and so on. Each day had different hours available for Torah study: some days more, some days less; the amount was not his main concern. What was most important for Reb Noson – and what is most important for us – was keeping to the goals he himself had established and committed himself to fulfill (*Rabbi Eliyahu Chaim Rosen*).

Reb Noson related: For a long time, I encountered great difficulty in my studies. I would enter the study hall filled with enthusiasm and intending to devote all my energy to my studies. But, no sooner had I begun, when inevitably something would happen to divert me from my intentions, distract my concentration and deflate my determination. And, no matter how determined I was, each day brought a new diversion and a different distraction. It was always something I hadn't anticipated, something I hadn't prepared myself for, and was helpless to avoid. As you can imagine, it did not take long before I was at my wits' end. I was ready to give up. But then I talked to the Rebbe. He told me that when it came to studying Torah, "a little is also good!" Hearing this changed my attitude totally. Afterwards, whenever I couldn't study as much as I desired, I was still satisfied and content with whatever I had managed to accomplish. This way, I was able to counter my difficulties in studying. By grabbing a little bit here, a little bit there, I eventually developed into a serious student (*Aveneha Barzel* p. 78). [It should be realized that Reb Noson was already a fully accomplished Torah scholar even before he met Rebbe Nachman.]



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One of the interpretations of loving God “with all your effort,” which we say daily as part of the Shema, is “And you shall love God... with all your money” (*Rashi*, Deuteronomy 6:5). This provides us with yet another tool for fostering diligence and determination in studying Torah. Quite simply, wherever and in whatever way possible, try to pay for Torah study. By paying someone to teach or study with you, you will naturally want to get your money’s worth. This will guarantee that you won’t be lax in your efforts to get as much out of the learning as you possibly can. You’ll be loathe to waste any time. Indeed, as a child, the Rebbe would use his allowance to pay his teacher extra money for each additional page of Talmud that his teacher taught him (*Rebbe Nachman’s Wisdom; His Praises #4*).

Rebbe Nachman once said: “Anyone who fulfills everything I tell them will certainly become a great Tzaddik. Obviously, the more one studies the more successful he will be” (*Tzaddik #320*).

(Taken from the book – [Crossing the Narrow Bridge: A Practical](#)

[Guide to Rebbe Nachman's Teachings](#); chapter 7 – Torah Study)