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Torah Study

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[Introduction 1](#_Toc20324615)

[The Shema 2](#_Toc20324616)

[Regular Study 4](#_Toc20324617)

[The Minimum And Maximum Amount 5](#_Toc20324618)

[Morning Prayers 6](#_Toc20324619)

[According To Our Desire 7](#_Toc20324620)

[Review Of Past Study 8](#_Toc20324621)

[Torah Study Plus An Occupation 9](#_Toc20324622)

[A Time For Everything 10](#_Toc20324623)

[Consequences 11](#_Toc20324624)

[Torah Scholars 12](#_Toc20324625)

[The Goal Of Torah Study 13](#_Toc20324626)

[Laws of Torah Study 14](#_Toc20324627)

[Bibliography 14](#_Toc20324628)

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# Introduction

In this study I would like to study *Torah[[1]](#footnote-1) study*. I want to understand what our Sages understood about the study of the Torah. I am studying this because it seems that Torah study is the most important thing that a [Jew](gen-jew.html) can do.

The [Midrash](orallaw.html) [teaches](teacher.html) that there is the work of the King of Kings to be constant in the study of the Torah:

[**Midrash**](orallaw.html) **Tanchuma Yelammedenu for: Shemot (**[**Exodus**](exodus.html)**) 32:16** *And the tablets were the work of God*. R. Joshua the son of Levi declared: Every day a heavenly voice reverberates from Mount Horeb exclaiming: “Woe unto you creatures for neglecting (lit, insulting) the Torah,” **for whosoever is not constant in his study of the Torah is rebuked by the Holy** [**One**](one.html)**, blessed be He**, as it is said: *And the tablets were the work of God.* It is like a man who asks his friend: “What is this made of?” And he replies: “The very best silver.” **So it is with regard to the work of the King of Kings; be engaged in the study of the Torah**.

This work of the King of Kings allows us to move beyond this [world](worlds.html), to reach into the heavenly realms. The study of the Torah is the only way we have of perceiving [HaShem](hashem.html). Rabbi [Michael](angels.html) L. Munk in, *The Wisdom in the* [*Hebrew*](hebrew.html) *Alphabet*, tells us the following:

*“The* [*number*](nchart.html)[*seven*](seven.html) *symbolizes the complete purpose of human existence, combining the* [*spiritual*](physical.html) *level of the* [*Sabbath*](sabbath.html) *with the* [*physical*](physical.html) *effort of the week. Going beyond* [*seven*](seven.html)*, the* [*number*](nchart.html)[*eight*](eight.html) *symbolizes man’s ability to transcend the limitations of* [*physical*](physical.html) *existence. Thus, with a gematria of* [*eight*](eight.html)*,* ח*stands for that which is on a plane above nature, i.e., the metaphysical Divine. The study of the Torah and the practice of its* [*commandments*](cmds613.html) *are the ways by which Israel can strive to exalt human spirituality towards the realm above the natural.”[[2]](#footnote-2)*

Not only is Torah study the work of the King of Kings, it is also the work of the [Mashiach](mashiach.html) ben David. It is [one](one.html) of the clear ways we have recognizing the [Mashiach](mashiach.html) when He comes, as we learn from the Rambam[[3]](#footnote-3) in his codification of *The* [*Laws*](law.html) *Concerning* [*Mashiach*](mashiach.html):

**4.** If a king will arise from the House of David who delves deeply into the study of the Torah and, like David his ancestor, observes its [mitzvot](cmds613.html)[[4]](#footnote-4) as prescribed by the Written [Law](law.html) and the Oral [Law](law.html); if he will compel all of Israel to [walk](walking.html) in [the way of the Torah] and repair the breaches [in its observance]; and if he will fight the wars of G-d; we may, with assurance, consider him [Mashiach](mashiach.html).[[5]](#footnote-5)

True [freedom](freedom.html) comes from the study of the Torah, as we learn from the [Mishna](orallaw.html):

***Avot 6:2*** *BARAITHA2. R. JOSHUA B. LEVI SAID: EVERY DAY A BATH KOL GOES FORTH FROM MOUNT HOREB, AND MAKES PROCLAMATION AND SAYS: WOE UNTO MEN ON ACCOUNT OF [THEIR] CONTEMPT TOWARDS THE TORAH, FOR WHOEVER OCCUPIES HIMSELF NOT WITH THE [STUDY OF] TORAH IS CALLED: ‘[THE] REBUKED [*[*ONE*](one.html)*]’ AS IT IS SAID, AS A RING OF GOLD IN A SWINE’S SNOUT, SO IS A FAIR WOMAN THAT TURNETH AWAY FROM DISCRETION, AND IT SAYS, AND THE TABLES WERE THE WORK OF GOD, AND THE WRITING WAS THE WRITING OF GOD, GRAVEN UPON THE TABLES. READ NOT HARUTH [WHICH MEANS ‘GRAVEN’] BUT HERUTH [WHICH MEANS ‘*[*FREEDOM*](freedom.html)*’]. FOR THERE IS NO FREE MAN FOR THEE BUT HE THAT OCCUPIES HIMSELF WITH THE STUDY OF THE TORAH; AND WHOEVER REGULARLY OCCUPIES HIMSELF WITH THE STUDY OF THE TORAH, LO, HE IS EXALTED, AS IT IS SAID, AND FROM MATTANAH TO NAHALIEL; AND NAHALIEL TO BAMOTH.*

The Rambam [teaches](teacher.html) us that, “Every [Jew](gen-jew.html) is obligated to study Torah, whether he is poor or rich, healthy or ill, young or old. Even if [one](one.html) is destitute; or if he has familial obligations, he must still establish fixed times for Torah study, day and night, as it says,[[6]](#footnote-6) ‘You shall toil in it day and night’”.[[7]](#footnote-7)

In addition to studying the Torah for himself, a man is obligated to [teach](teacher.html) his son the Torah as well. The Rambam codified this as well:

[***Talmud***](orallaw.html) ***Torah 1:03*** *And he is obligated to hire a* [*teacher*](teacher.html) *to* [*teach*](teacher.html) *his son. He is not obligated to* [*teach*](teacher.html) *his fellow’s son for free, or except for free. If his father didn’t* [*teach*](teacher.html) *him, he is obligated to* [*teach*](teacher.html) *himself when he becomes aware, as it says: “you shall study them and guard them, to fulfill them”.[[8]](#footnote-8) Similarly, you find that study precedes action in every place, since study leads to action and action does not lead to study.*

When a father hires a [teacher](teacher.html) for his son, he is beginning the process to help his son select a Torah [teacher](teacher.html) who will be his [teacher](teacher.html) for the rest of his life. Without a [teacher](teacher.html) it is impossible to learn the Torah. For this reason, the Rambam and [Mishna](orallaw.html) codifies the requirement:

***Pirke Avot 1:6*** *JOSHUA B. PERAHIAH USED TO SAY: APPOINT FOR THYSELF A* [*TEACHER*](teacher.html)*[[9]](#footnote-9) AND ACQUIRE FOR THYSELF A COMPANION[[10]](#footnote-10) AND JUDGE ALL MEN IN THE SCALE OF* [*MERIT*](merit.html)*.*

The inference of the above [Mishna](orallaw.html) is that not only should [one](one.html) make a [teacher](teacher.html) for himself, but it also implies that he himself should become a Torah [teacher](teacher.html). Thus we understand that to learn Torah means to [teach](teacher.html) Torah and to perform the [mitzvot](cmds613.html) in order that we learn how to love [HaShem](hashem.html). Without regular Torah learning it is impossible to fulfill the words of the [Shema](shema.html)[[11]](#footnote-11) that we should “love [HaShem](hashem.html) our God with all of our [heart](body.html), with all of our soul, and with all of our possessions”.

# The [Shema](shema.html)

We can get a feeling for how important Torah study is, by looking at the [command](cmds613.html) of [HaShem](hashem.html), in the [Shema](shema.html), which we are commanded to recite twice a day:

***Devarim (Deuteronomy) 6:4-9*** *Hear, O Israel:* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *our God,* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *is* [*one*](one.html)*: 5 And thou shalt love* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *thy God with all thine* [*heart*](body.html)*, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. 6 And these words, which I* [*command*](cmds613.html) *thee this day, shall be in thine* [*heart*](body.html)*: 7 And thou shalt* [*teach*](teacher.html) *them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. 8 And thou shalt bind them for a* [*sign*](signs.html) *upon thine* [*hand*](fourteen.html)*, and they shall be as frontlets between thine* [*eyes*](body.html)*. 9 And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.*

There is no way, for parents, to [teach](teacher.html) Torah to our children except we learn Torah [first](one.html).[[12]](#footnote-12) There is no way to [speak](mashal.html) the words of Torah “when we sit in our house and when we [walk](walking.html) by the way”, except we study Torah [first](one.html).

Can the [time](time.html) for the obligation of Torah study be quantified? It cannot. The [time](time.html) of each person’s obligation of Torah study is different, and varies according to personal circumstances. Those with a strong [desire](needs.html) and lots of [time](time.html) should use the [time](time.html) wisely. We have [time](time.html) because [HaShem](hashem.html) has given us what we need with undue effort and [time](time.html). When [one](one.html) does not have a long commute, very little overtime, and non-[physical](physical.html) labor, he can be sure that [HaShem](hashem.html) gave him these things in order that he should have more [time](time.html) to study Torah, [teach](teacher.html) Torah, and perform the [mitzvot](cmds613.html). We are not given free [time](time.html) to indulge in pleasures.

The principle, as set out by a [number](nchart.html) of authorities, is that [one](one.html) must study the Torah in the [time](time.html) that is ‘free’.[[13]](#footnote-13) As Rav Elchanan Wasserman[[14]](#footnote-14) writes, during the [time](time.html) that a person spends at work, there is no obligation to study Torah: The obligation of Torah study is incumbent during the [time](time.html) that a person is not at work.

Further, the Rambam codified[[15]](#footnote-15) that we are obligated to study the Torah *day and night*, just as the [Shema](shema.html) [commands](cmds613.html). [One](one.html) can discern that he has fulfilled his obligation by simply reciting the [Shema](shema.html). Never the less, those who have more [time](time.html) should devote this additional [time](time.html) to the study of Torah.

I heard of a young African woman who was brought, by her friend, from her village to a small town in America. When she went to the apartment of her friend, she was absolutely bowled over by the fact that the apartment had “multiple sources of [clean](purity.html) potable water *inside* the house”! In her village, she had to [travel](mashal.html) several miles, twice a day, to fetch water for her family from the river. Those of us who grew up with sinks in multiple rooms of the house have become jaded to the amount of [time](time.html) that we gain simply by having water already inside our house. We do not have to [travel](mashal.html) to get our water. This sobering story should give us pause to thank and praise [HaShem](hashem.html) for meeting our [needs](needs.html) in such a wondrous way. We can demonstrate our gratitude by spending this precious [time](time.html) getting to [know](daat.html) [HaShem](hashem.html) through Torah study.

A mourner is normally forbidden from studying the Torah because the study of Torah is a pleasurable [experience](experience.html). The mourner, however, is required to [mourn](mourning.html), which is a [time](time.html) of sadness. Therefore he should refrain from doing things which bring pleasure, including the study of the Torah. Now, if we are commanded to study Torah night and day, why is the mourner exempt? After all, a [command](cmds613.html) of [HaShem](hashem.html) should not be take lightly.

The Ramban[[16]](#footnote-16) answered simply: The mourner will say [Shema](shema.html) during morning and evening [prayers](prayer.html); this minimal recitation automatically fulfills the [mitzva](cmds613.html) of learning Torah. Therefore, the mourner is not entirely exempt from the [mitzva](cmds613.html) of Torah study because he [needs](needs.html) to recite the [Shema](shema.html) anyway.

Thus we see that while the mourner must study, his obligation is minimal in order that his pleasure should be minimal.

From the mourner’s obligation, we should understand that Torah study was intended to be pleasurable. This does not mean that we do not have to labor and sweat over our study. On the contrary, the pleasure only comes after long arduous hours of toil in the Torah. Rashi comments on this toil:

**Rashi’s Commentary for: ‎**

**Vayiqra (Leviticus) 26:3 and observe My** [**commandments**](cmds613.html) You shall toil in the study of Torah in order to observe and fulfill [the [commandments](cmds613.html) (*Torath* [*Kohanim*](priests.html) 26:2). This is similar to, “[Hear, O Israel, the statutes and ordinances...] and learn them, and keep in mind to do them” (Deut. 5:1) **[i.e., learn the Torah in order to keep them in your** [**heart**](body.html) **and perform them].-[*Sifthei Chachamim*]**

**Vayiqra (Leviticus) 26:14** **But if you do not listen to Me** **to toil in [the study of] Torah in order to** [**know**](daat.html) **the exposition of the Sages [corresponding to verse 3].** I might think that this refers to fulfilling the [commandments](cmds613.html). When Scripture says, “and you do not perform all these [commandments](cmds613.html),” the fulfillment of [commandments](cmds613.html) is [already] stated. So what is the meaning of "if you do not listen to Me"? **To toil in [the study of] Torah.** And what is the meaning of "to Me"? This is [speaking](mashal.html) only about someone who knows his Master, and yet willfully rebels against Him (*Sanh.* 109a). Likewise, regarding Nimrod [whom Scripture calls], **“a powerful hunter *before the Lord* ” (Gen. 10:9), [it means that] he recognized God but intentionally rebelled against Him**; likewise, regarding the people of Sodom, [referred to as], “very evil and sinful *against the Lord* ” (Gen. 13:13)—[it means that] they recognized their Master but intentionally rebelled against Him.-[*Torath* [*Kohanim*](priests.html)26:18]

**and do not perform** **If you do not learn [the Torah], you will not perform.** Scripture hereby enumerates [two](two.html) transgressions [namely, (a) not learning the Torah and therefore (b) not fulfilling its [commandments](cmds613.html) properly].-[*Torath* [*Kohanim*](priests.html) 26:18]

# Regular Study

The Sages of the [Mishna](orallaw.html) [taught](teacher.html) that we must set aside regular times for our Torah study. The halachah is that we should each fix regular times for Torah study, morning and evening; whether for a short or long [time](time.html); whether in a class or with a learning partner or alone; whether studying [Talmud](orallaw.html) or halachah or [Jewish](gen-jew.html) thought.

All these variables depend on a person’s [time](time.html), interest and ability; but they are less important than that we fix a [time](time.html) and stick to it. The [Mishna](orallaw.html) codifies this requirement:

***Pirke Avot 1:15****. SHAMMAI USED TO SAY: MAKE THY [STUDY OF THE] TORAH [A MATTER OF] ESTABLISHED [REGULARITY];[[17]](#footnote-17)* [*SPEAK*](mashal.html) *LITTLE, BUT DO MUCH; AND RECEIVE ALL MEN WITH A PLEASANT COUNTENANCE.[[18]](#footnote-18)*

The [Gemara](orallaw.html) [teaches](teacher.html) that [one](one.html) of the questions that a person is asked (after 120 years) when he arrives at the Heavenly Tribunal is:

***Shabbath 31a*** *Raba said, When man is led in for Judgment[[19]](#footnote-19) he is asked, Did you deal faithfully [i.e., with integrity], did you fix times for learning, did you engage in procreation, did you hope for* [*salvation*](salvation.html)*, did you engage in the dialectics of wisdom, did you understand* [*one*](one.html) *thing from another.*

Notice that the question is not about the quantity of [one](one.html)’s learning or even the quality thereof, but about the *regularity* of the learning.

Hakham Ibn Ezra [taught](teacher.html) that [one](one.html) cannot properly comprehend the [Talmud](orallaw.html), and therefore the Torah, if [one](one.html) does not [know](daat.html) the sciences, for there are many passages in the Torah and the [Talmud](orallaw.html) that are either incomprehensible or given to misinterpretation by [one](one.html) who has no prior [knowledge](knowledge.html) of the sciences. Ibn Ezra thought that [knowledge](knowledge.html) of the sciences was indispensable for a correct interpretation of Scripture. Thus he opens his *Yesod Mora* with these words:

*“I begin by saying that aside from man’s supernal rational soul, a human being has no preeminence over a beast. The soul [...] was placed in the* [*body*](body.html) *to be shown the Lord’s work, to study the works of her master, and to observe His* [*commandments*](cmds613.html)*. […] Now there are many sorts of* [*knowledge*](knowledge.html)*, each* [*one*](one.html) *of which is helpful. All of wisdom’s categories are rungs in the ladder that leads to True Wisdom. […] Now* [*one*](one.html) *who possesses* [*knowledge*](knowledge.html) *of the Massorah* *but has not studied any other wisdom is like a camel that carries a load of silk. It is of no use to the silk and the silk is of no use to it.”[[20]](#footnote-20)*

Therefore, [knowledge](knowledge.html) of both a religious and a scientific kind were necessary for proper religious life.

Thus we would expect that in addition to studying Torah, [one](one.html) should combine this study with the study of the sciences, at a regular [time](time.html). To put it another way, studying the sciences in order to understand the Torah – IS Torah study!

The Rambam also reiterates the [command](cmds613.html) that we should have an established, or fixed, [time](time.html) for Torah study, based on the understanding of Yehoshua 1:8.

[***Talmud***](orallaw.html) ***Torah 1:08*** *Every* [*Jewish*](gen-jew.html) *man is obligated in* [*Talmud*](orallaw.html) *Torah;[[21]](#footnote-21) whether poor or rich, whether healthy or afflicted; whether a young man or an old man whose strength is gone; even if he was a poor man taking his sustenance from charity and going door-to-door; even a family man is obligated to establish a* [*time*](time.html) *for* [*Talmud*](orallaw.html) *Torah during the day and at night; as it says, “and you shall meditate upon it [Torah] day and night”.[[22]](#footnote-22)*

# The Minimum And Maximum Amount

Our Sages[[23]](#footnote-23) [teach](teacher.html) that the minimum amount of Torah that we should study, no matter what, are *the words of the* [*Shema*](shema.html), which we recite / study twice a day. Both men and women are obligated to study Torah.[[24]](#footnote-24) We saw, earlier, that this minimum amount of study is incumbent even on the mourner.

***Menachoth 99b***[*GEMARA*](orallaw.html)*: It was* [*taught*](teacher.html)*: R. Jose says, Even if the old [Shewbread] was taken away in the morning and the* [*new*](new.html) *was set down in the evening there is no harm. How then am I to explain the verse, ‘Before me continually’? [It* [*teaches*](teacher.html) *that] the table should not remain overnight without bread.*

*R. Ammi said, From these words of R. Jose[[25]](#footnote-25) we learn that even though a man learns but* [*one*](one.html) *chapter in the morning and* [*one*](one.html) *chapter in the evening he has thereby fulfilled the precept of ‘This book of the* [*law*](law.html) *shall not depart out of thy* [*mouth*](body.html)*’.[[26]](#footnote-26)*

*R. Johanan said in the* [*name*](name.html) *of R. Simeon b. Yohai, Even though a man but reads the* [*Shema*](shema.html)*’[[27]](#footnote-27) morning and evening he has thereby fulfilled the precept of ‘[This book of the* [*law*](law.html)*] shall not depart’. It is forbidden, however, to say this in the presence of ‘amme ha-arez.[[28]](#footnote-28) But Raba said, It is a meritorious act to say it in the presence of amme ha-arez.[[29]](#footnote-29)*

In this minimum act of studying the Torah, a person engages with The Word itself,[[30]](#footnote-30) *bonding himself with* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) to a greater degree than all other [mitzvot](cmds613.html) ([commandments](cmds613.html)).[[31]](#footnote-31)

Now that we [know](daat.html) the minimum amount of required Torah study, we need to see what Our Sages [teach](teacher.html) is the maximum amount of [time](time.html) that we can spend in the study of the Torah.

The maximum amount of [time](time.html) we can devote to the study of the Torah in found in our morning [prayers](prayer.html). In our Shacharit [prayer](prayer.html) we note that Torah study is [one](one.html) of several [mitzvot](cmds613.html) which have no maximum amount:

*These are the* [*Laws*](law.html) *for which the Torah did not mandate specific amounts: How much growing produce must be left in the corner of the field for the poor; how much of the* [*first*](one.html) *fruits must be offered at the Holy* [*Temple*](temple.html)*; how much* [*one*](one.html) *must bring as an* [*offering*](korbanot) *when* [*one*](one.html) *visits the Holy* [*Temple*](temple.html)[*three*](three.html) *times a year; how much* [*one*](one.html) *must do when doing acts of kindness; and there is no maximum amount of Torah that a person must study.*

Our Sages [teach](teacher.html) that since there is no maximum requirement, that we should use whatever [time](time.html) is available for our study rather than for our own pleasure. For those whose midda (measure) is the study of Torah, there is not enough [time](time.html) in the day for the study he wishes to do. His curiosity and [desire](needs.html) drive his to study at every opportunity. These are the ones who constantly find Torah gems that light up their [eyes](body.html) and burn within them until they can share these delights with others.

# Morning [Prayers](prayer.html)

Before the [Shema](shema.html), we begin our morning [prayers](prayer.html) with the affirmation that “the study of Torah is equal to all [the [mitzvot](cmds613.html)]”, as we see in the [Gemara](orallaw.html):

***Shabbath 127a*** *R. Judah b. Shila said in R. Assi’s* [*name*](name.html) *in R. Johanan’s* [*name*](name.html)*: There are* [*six*](six.html) *things, the fruit of which man* [*eats*](eating.html) *in this* [*world*](worlds.html)*, while the principal remains for him for the* [*world*](futures.html) *to come, viz.: Hospitality to wayfarers, visiting the sick, meditation in* [*prayer*](prayer.html)*, early attendance at the Beth Hamidrash, rearing* [*one*](one.html)*’s sons to the study of the Torah, and judging* [*one*](one.html)*’s neighbour in the scale of* [*merit*](merit.html)*.[[32]](#footnote-32) But that is not so? For we learnt: These are the things which man performs and enjoys their fruits in this* [*world*](worlds.html)*, while the principal remains for him for the* [*world*](futures.html) *to come, viz.: honouring* [*one*](one.html)*’s parents, the practice of loving deeds,[[33]](#footnote-33) and making peace between man and his fellow, while the study of the Torah surpasses them all.*

The [Mishna](orallaw.html) tells us something similar:

***Pe’ah 1:1.*** *THE FOLLOWING ARE THE THINGS FOR WHICH NO DEFINITE QUANTITY IS PRESCRIBED:1 THE CORNERS [OF THE FIELD].* [*FIRST*](one.html)*-FRUITS, [THE OFFERINGS BROUGHT] ON APPEARING [BEFORE THE LORD AT THE* [*THREE*](three.html) *PILGRIM* [*FESTIVALS*](festivals.html)*]. THE PRACTICE OF LOVINGKINDNESS, AND THE STUDY OF THE TORAH. THE FOLLOWING ARE THE THINGS FOR WHICH A MAN ENJOYS THE FRUITS IN THIS* [*WORLD*](worlds.html) *WHILE THE PRINCIPAL REMAINS FOR HIM IN THE* [*WORLD*](futures.html) *TO COME: THE HONOURING OF FATHER AND MOTHER, THE PRACTICE OF CHARITY, AND THE MAKING OF PEACE BETWEEN A MAN AND HIS FRIEND; BUT THE STUDY OF THE TORAH IS EQUAL TO THEM ALL.*

How is the study of Torah equivalent to all these other acts of goodness? Because it’s the [one](one.html) thing that [teaches](teacher.html) and includes all the others. However, the *Lev Shlomo* notes that the antecedents of the phrase “them all” are the various [mitzvot](cmds613.html) which are mentioned previously in the [Mishna](orallaw.html) and not “all the [mitzvot](cmds613.html) of the Torah”. Hence, he refers to the [Jerusalem](city.html) [Talmud](orallaw.html),[[34]](#footnote-34) which states:

***Pe’ah 1:1*** *All the* [*mitzvot*](cmds613.html) *of the Torah are not worth* [*one*](one.html) *word of the Torah.*

The [prayers](prayer.html) are designed so that we should read about the primacy of Torah study early in the [prayers](prayer.html). This should awaken us to the importance of our concentration when we come to the recitation of the [Shema](shema.html) later on.

We should also note that when we do the Shacharit [prayer](prayer.html) we say the Torah blessing and read the Aaronic benediction to insure that the blessing is not said in vain. Never the less, it is the recitation of the [Shema](shema.html) which fulfills our obligation of Torah study. To those who have more [time](time.html), this [one](one.html) Torah blessing is sufficient for our study of Torah during the day.

The [Gemara](orallaw.html) [teaches](teacher.html):

[***Shabbat***](sabbath.html) ***10a*** *Rava observed Rav Hamnuna* [*praying*](prayer.html) *at length. He said, ‘You are putting aside* [*eternal life*](eternal.html) *and involving yourself with momentary life!’ And he [Rav Hamnuna] explained, ‘*[*Prayer*](prayer.html) *has its* [*time*](time.html)*, and Torah study has its* [*time*](time.html)*.’*

Rashi explains: ‘[Eternal life](eternal.html)’ refers to Torah, whereas [prayer](prayer.html) focuses on the [needs](needs.html) of our ephemeral [physical](physical.html) life, such as healing, peace, [food](food.html).

[Halacha](walking.html) follows Rabbi Yochanan’s opinion[[35]](#footnote-35) that Torah scholars’ absolute exemption from [prayer](prayer.html) is limited to those, like Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, whose “Torah is their profession”, i.e., those who devote all their [time](time.html) exclusively to Torah study. Since they are not engaged in matters of this [world](worlds.html), they are exempt from [prayer](prayer.html). Other than these rare exceptions, the obligation is binding and is taken for granted in the teachings our Hakhamim.[[36]](#footnote-36)

From this we learn how great is the study of Torah that it is possible to exempt [one](one.html) from the obligation to [pray](prayer.html). We can also learn that Torah study draws us near to [HaShem](hashem.html) in the same way that our [prayers](prayer.html) draw us near to Him. Thus we can understand that [one](one.html) of the purposes of Torah study is to [teach](teacher.html) us how to love [HaShem](hashem.html) our God, as we say in the [Shema](shema.html).

# According To Our [Desire](needs.html)

Our Sages [teach](teacher.html) that an essential aspect of Torah study, as opposed to any other kind of study, is that a man should occupy himself with the specific aspect of Torah study to which his [heart](body.html) is drawn.

***Avodah Zarah 19a*** *Said Rabbi: A man can learn [well] only that part of the Torah which is his* [*heart*](body.html)*’s* [*desire*](needs.html)*,[[37]](#footnote-37) for it is said, But whose* [*desire*](needs.html) *is in the* [*law*](law.html) *of the Lord.[[38]](#footnote-38)*

The above [Gemara](orallaw.html) was written as an explanation of [Psalm](psalms1.html) [one](one.html):

***Tehillim (***[***Psalms***](psalms1.html)***) 1:1-2*** *Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. 2 But his delight is in the* [*law*](law.html) *of* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*; and in his* [*law*](law.html) *doth he meditate day and night.*

If [one](one.html) learns that which he [desires](needs.html), it will penetrate deeper, change his character traits for the better and awake the [desire](needs.html) within him to learn more and more.

Not only is the study of Torah a matter of our [heart](body.html)’s [desire](needs.html), but the performance of the [mitzvot](cmds613.html) of the Torah are also to be performed by the [one](one.html) whose [heart](body.html) is drawn to it. For example, if [one](one.html) has the [mitzva](cmds613.html) of giving to charity ‘A’ or charity ‘B’, then [one](one.html) should give to the charity to which his [heart](body.html) is drawn. He is not only permitted to give to the charity of his [desire](needs.html), but, he is *obligated* to give to the [one](one.html) which he [*desires*](needs.html) to give.

For those who [desire](needs.html) to become king, Our Sages have [taught](teacher.html) us the way. The [Talmud](orallaw.html) says that the Rabbanan, those who study Torah, are called kings. Why? Because through the study of Torah, they [merit](merit.html) the crown of Torah.

***Gittin 62a*** *As R. Huna and R. Hisda were once* [*sitting*](mashal.html) *together. Geniba began to pass by. Said* [*one*](one.html) *to the other, Let us rise before him, since he is a learned man. The other replied; Shall we rise before* [*one*](one.html) *who is quarrelsome? At this point he came up to them and said, Peace to you, kings, peace to you, kings. They said to him; Whence do you learn that the Rabbis are called kings? He replied; Because it is written, By me [wisdom][[39]](#footnote-39) kings reign.[[40]](#footnote-40)*

Never the less, we should not see Torah study for the sake of acquiring kingship, but rather, Torah study is [knowledge](knowledge.html) of the Torah for its own sake. This is the function of the Written Torah and the [oral Torah](orallaw.html). Even if we do not fully understand the words of the Torah, we still fulfill the [mitzva](cmds613.html) of Torah study. As the Sages [taught](teacher.html):

***Avodah******Zarah******19a*** [*One*](one.html) *should always* [*first*](one.html) *learn superficially, and later contemplate [what he studied] ... even if* [*one*](one.html) *does not fully understand what he has read*.

We have seen in the [Shema](shema.html) that [one](one.html) should diligently [teach](teacher.html) his children. What does this mean? Our Sages answer our question:

***Kiddushin 30a*** *Our Rabbis* [*taught*](teacher.html)*: And thou shalt* [*teach*](teacher.html) *them diligently[[41]](#footnote-41) [means] that the words of the Torah shall be clear-cut in your* [*mouth*](body.html)*, so that if anyone asks you something, you should not shew doubt and then answer him, but [be able to] answer him immediately, for it is said, say unto wisdom, Thou art my sister;[[42]](#footnote-42) and it is also said, Bind them upon thy* [*fingers*](body.html)*; write them upon the table of thine* [*heart*](body.html)*;[[43]](#footnote-43) and it is also said: As arrows are in the* [*hand*](fourteen.html) *of a mighty man, so are the children of thy youth;[[44]](#footnote-44) and it is also said, sharp arrows of the mighty;[[45]](#footnote-45) and it is also said: Thine arrows are sharp; the peoples fall under thee;[[46]](#footnote-46) and it is also said: Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them; They shall not be ashamed, when they* [*speak*](mashal.html) *with their enemies in the gate.[[47]](#footnote-47)*

# Review Of Past Study

[One](one.html) who is lax and does not review his studies, thereby forgetting things that he has learned, violates a negative [commandment](cmds613.html): “Only be careful to protect your soul exceedingly, *lest you forget these things*”.[[48]](#footnote-48) As the [Gemara](orallaw.html) [teaches](teacher.html):

***Sanhedrin 99a*** *Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korcha says, ‘Whoever studies Torah and then forgets what he learned resembles a woman who gives* [*birth*](birth.html) *and then buries her child’.*

So, how often should we revise our Torah studies? Is there in fact a certain amount of [time](time.html) that [one](one.html) is obligated to go over [one](one.html)’s Torah learning?  
  
The truth is that there is a concept of going over a piece of Torah at least [four](four.html) times initially. We see that when [HaShem](hashem.html) [taught](teacher.html) Moshe some Torah, Moshe then transmitted this to his brother Aharon, Aharon’s [two](two.html) youngest sons, and the [seventy](seventy.html) elders, and then the rest of the Bne Israel. Hence, Moshe [taught](teacher.html) the Torah that [HaShem](hashem.html) [taught](teacher.html) him - [four](four.html) times (Eruvin 54).

***Eiruvin 54b*** *Our Rabbis learned: What was the procedure of the instruction in the oral* [*law*](law.html)*? Moses learned from the* [*mouth*](body.html) *of the Omnipotent. Then Aaron entered and Moses* [*taught*](teacher.html) *him his lesson. Aaron then moved aside and sat down on Moses’ left. Thereupon Aaron’s sons entered and Moses* [*taught*](teacher.html) *them their lesson. His sons then moved aside, Eleazar taking his seat on Moses’ right and Ithamar on Aaron’s left. R. Judah stated: Aaron was always on Moses right. Thereupon the elders entered and Moses* [*taught*](teacher.html) *them their lesson, and when the elders moved aside all the people entered and Moses* [*taught*](teacher.html) *them their lesson. It thus followed that Aaron heard the lesson* [*four*](four.html) *times, his sons heard it* [*three*](three.html) *times, the elders twice and all the people once. At this stage Moses departed and Aaron* [*taught*](teacher.html) *them his lesson. Then Aaron departed and his sons* [*taught*](teacher.html) *them their lesson. His sons then departed and the elders* [*taught*](teacher.html) *them their lesson. It thus followed that everybody heard the lesson* [*four*](four.html) *times. From here R. Eliezer inferred: It is a man’s duty to* [*teach*](teacher.html) *his pupil [his lesson]* [*four*](four.html) *times. For this is arrived at a minori ad majus: Aaron who learned from Moses who had it from the Omnipotent had to learn his lesson* [*four*](four.html) *times how much more so an ordinary pupil who learns from an ordinary* [*teacher*](teacher.html)*.*

The above is for starters. For more advanced Torah students, there is a minimum of 101 times, as we learn from the [Gemara](orallaw.html).

***Chagigah 9b*** *Bar He-He said to Hillel: Then shall ye again discern between the righteous and the* [*wicked*](wicked.html)*, between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not.[[49]](#footnote-49) ‘The righteous’ is the same as ‘he that serveth God’; ‘the* [*wicked*](wicked.html)*’ is the same as ‘he that serveth Him not’! — He answered him: He that serveth Him and he that serveth Him not both refer to such as are perfectly righteous; but he that repeated his chapter a hundred times is not to be compared with him who repeated it a hundred and* [*one*](one.html) *times. Said [Bar He-He] to him: And because of once he is called ‘he that serveth Him not’? — He answered: Yes, go and learn from the mule-drivers market;* [*ten*](ten.html) *parasangs for* [*one*](one.html) *zuz,[[50]](#footnote-50)* [*eleven*](eleven.html) *parasangs for* [*two*](two.html) *zuz.*

As noted above, there is a difference between [one](one.html) who serves [HaShem](hashem.html) and [one](one.html) who doesn’t. On this, the [Talmud](orallaw.html) asks “Is this asking an obvious thing as if to say what is the difference between a righteous person and an [wicked](wicked.html) person?” The [Talmud](orallaw.html) then goes on to state that there is a difference between [one](one.html) who learns a piece of Torah 101 times, and [one](one.html) who learns it only 100 times.

# Torah Study Plus An Occupation

The Sages of the [Mishna](orallaw.html) have noted that the vast majority of men are not at a level where they can devote themselves fulltime to the study of the Torah. In fact, they note that most men should combine their study of the Torah with an occupation.

***Pirke Avot 2:2.*** *RABBAN GAMALIEL THE SON OF R. JUDAH THE PATRIARCH[[51]](#footnote-51) SAID: EXCELLENT IS THE STUDY OF THE TORAH TOGETHER WITH A WORLDLY OCCUPATION,[[52]](#footnote-52) FOR THE ENERGY [TAKEN UP] BY BOTH OF THEM KEEPS* [*SIN*](sin.html) *OUT OF* [*ONE*](one.html)*’S MIND; AND [AS FOR] ALL [STUDY OF THE] TORAH WHERE THERE IS NO WORLDLY OCCUPATION, THE END THEREOF [IS THAT] IT COMES TO NOUGHT[[53]](#footnote-53) AND BRINGS* [*SIN*](sin.html) *IN ITS TRAIN;[[54]](#footnote-54) AND ALL WHO LABOUR WITH THE* [*COMMUNITY*](community.html)*, LET THEM LABOUR WITH THEM FOR THE [SAKE OF THE]* [*NAME*](name.html) *OF* [*HEAVEN*](heaven.html)*, FOR THE* [*MERIT*](merit.html) *OF THEIR* [*FATHERS*](fathers.html) *SUSTAINS THEM, AND THEIR RIGHTEOUSNESS ENDURES FOR EVER; AND AS FOR YOU, [GOD IN SUCH CASE SAYS] I ACCOUNT YOU WORTHY OF MUCH REWARD, AS IF YOU [YOURSELVES] HAD [ACTUALLY] ACCOMPLISHED [IT ALL].*

If the study of Torah is so important, why would our Sages decree that we should have an occupation as well?

The above [Mishna](orallaw.html) [teaches](teacher.html) us that the primary reason to combine Torah study with an occupation to keep us far from [sin](sin.html). If we do not have any idle [time](time.html), then we will have fewer opportunities to [sin](sin.html). Most of us would not fully apply themselves to study if we have to do it for the entire day. We would become distracted, weary, and bored. These [three](three.html) would quickly lead us to [sin](sin.html).

It also turns out that if we spent all of our [time](time.html) studying Torah, many of us would never learn important lessons that can only be learned from an occupation. Many Torah [laws](law.html) are applicable only to the [world](worlds.html) of business. It is only in an understanding of business that we can begin to understand and apply these [laws](law.html).

It is also worth noting that most of us would require charity if we spent all of our [time](time.html) in the study of Torah. This would not be a good thing. Even if we were able to do without charity, lack of an occupation would lead to poverty and want. Poverty has driven many to [sin](sin.html) in order to meet their [needs](needs.html).

In Israel, some of those who study Torah are also in the army. The army thus becomes their occupation.

Finally, most men need an occupation to find fulfillment, to feel productive. There is a lot of satisfaction to be found in completing a task which results in making the [world](worlds.html) a better place. Whether we build houses, cars, or donuts, most men have an intrinsic need to be productive. An occupation fulfills this need. It is important that we not be locked away in the Bet [Midrash](orallaw.html)[[55]](#footnote-55) all day, but rather that we interact with the [world](worlds.html) through [community](community.html) service and an occupation.

Thus Torah study combined with an occupation will keep a man far from [sin](sin.html) and make most men feel better about their study.

# A [Time](time.html) For Everything

King Shlomo [taught](teacher.html) us that [HaShem](hashem.html) created a special [time](time.html) for everything.

***Kohelet (Ecclesiastes) 3:1*** *To every thing there is a season, and a* [*time*](time.html) *to every purpose under the* [*heaven*](heaven.html)*:*

The [Talmud](orallaw.html) looks at King Shlomo’s statement and declares that there is a [time](time.html) to be engaged in Torah study and a [time](time.html) to be engaged in [prayer](prayer.html). For certain men, spending [time](time.html) in [prayer](prayer.html) takes away from their Torah study, which they see as more important. To others, [prayer](prayer.html) and Torah study compliment [one](one.html) another.

The [Talmud](orallaw.html) records [one](one.html) of this confrontations: “Rava saw Rav Hamenuna [praying](prayer.html) at length. He commented to his colleague: They neglect “*Chayei Olam*” ([eternal life](eternal.html), i.e., Torah study) and occupy themselves with “*Chayei Sha’ah*” (temporal life — [prayer](prayer.html))! But Rav Hamenuna did not agree. He held that there is a [time](time.html) for [prayer](prayer.html) and a [time](time.html) for Torah study”.[[56]](#footnote-56)

Thus we see that our Sages have decreed that the vast majority of men should interrupt their Torah study to [pray](prayer.html) at the appropriate times.

Our Sages have also decreed that there is a [time](time.html) for the study of the scripture, a [time](time.html) for the study of the [Mishna](orallaw.html), and a [time](time.html) for the study of the [Talmud](orallaw.html).

***Kiddushin 30a*** *R. Safra said on the* [*authority*](authority.html) *of R. Joshua b. Hanania: What is meant by, and thou shalt* [*teach*](teacher.html) *them diligently [we-shinnantem] unto thy children?[[57]](#footnote-57) Read not we-shinnantem, but we-shillashtem: [you shall divide into* [*three*](three.html)*]:* [*one*](one.html) *should always divide his years into* [*three*](three.html)*: [devoting] a* [*third*](three.html) *to Mikra, a* [*third*](three.html) *to* [*Mishna*](orallaw.html)*, and a* [*third*](three.html) *to* [*Talmud*](orallaw.html)*. Does* [*one*](one.html) *then* [*know*](daat.html) *how long he will live? — This refers only to days.*

The [Talmud](orallaw.html), therefore, postulates that periods of study should be apportioned, “[one](one.html) [third](three.html) to Scripture, [one](one.html) [third](three.html) to [Mishna](orallaw.html), and [one](one.html) [third](three.html) to [Talmud](orallaw.html) [that is, [Gemara](orallaw.html)]”.

As we learned earlier, Our Sages have decreed that most men should combine an occupation with their study of the Torah. They saw a [time](time.html) for both.

The [Talmud](orallaw.html) has a favorable attitude towards working. The ideal is to combine the study of Torah with an occupation. Some statements about work include:

***Kiddushin 29a*** *Whoever does not* [*teach*](teacher.html) *his son a trade, it is as though he* [*taught*](teacher.html) *him to commit robbery.*

***Avot 2:2*** *All Torah that is not combined with work will eventually cease and lead to* [*sin*](sin.html)*.*

***Avot D’Rabbi Noson 11:1*** *A person should love work and not hate it; for just as the Torah was given with a* [*covenant*](covenant.html)*, so too was work given with a* [*covenant*](covenant.html)*.*

***Avot D’Rabbi Noson 11:1*** *Even God did not let His presence rest upon Israel until they had performed some work.*

***Pesachim 113a*** *Skin a carcass in the street and receive wages and do not say I am an important person and this* [*type*](types.html) *of work is beneath my dignity.*

Thus we see that even with Torah study that there is a [time](time.html) for study and a [time](time.html) for an occupation. A [time](time.html) for scripture and a [time](time.html) for [Mishna](orallaw.html). A [time](time.html) for study and a [time](time.html) for [community](community.html) service. A [time](time.html) for study and a [time](time.html) for [prayer](prayer.html) and [mitzvot](cmds613.html). Balancing our [time](time.html) between what is required of us will allow us to serve [HaShem](hashem.html) with gladness and joy. It will allow us to cleave to [HaShem](hashem.html) and feel satisfaction in this service.

King Shlomo was a very wise man. There is, indeed, a [time](time.html) for everything.

# [Consequences](conseq.html)

Our Sages have [taught](teacher.html) that all of our actions have [consequences](conseq.html). Some are profitable and some are not profitable. If we use our Torah study [time](time.html) correctly, then we build our relationship with [HaShem](hashem.html) and our [Olam HaBa](futures.html). If we waste our Torah study [time](time.html), then there are negative [consequences](conseq.html), as Our Sages [teach](teacher.html):

***Pirke Avot 1:13****. HE [ALSO] USED TO SAY: A* [*NAME*](name.html) *THAT IS WIDESPREAD LOSES ITS FAME;* [*ONE*](one.html) *WHO DOES NOT ADD [TO HIS* [*KNOWLEDGE*](knowledge.html)*] CAUSES [IT] TO CEASE; WHOEVER DOES NOT STUDY[[58]](#footnote-58) [THE TORAH] DESERVES DEATH; WHOEVER MAKES [UNWORTHY] USE OF THE CROWN[[59]](#footnote-59) [OF LEARNING] PASSETH AWAY.*

At the [time](time.html) of war against the inhabitants of [Jericho](stages.html), the verse states:

***Yehoshua 5:13*** *And it was when Yehoshua was in* [*Jericho*](stages.html)*, and he raised his* [*eyes*](body.html) *and he saw a man* [*standing*](mashal.html) *opposite him with a drawn sword in his* [*hand*](fourteen.html)*. And Yehoshua went over to him and said to him, ‘Are you* [*one*](one.html) *of ours or are you* [*one*](one.html) *of our enemies?’ And he said, ‘No, for I am an officer of the legions of G-d.’*

The [Gemara](orallaw.html)[[60]](#footnote-60) elaborates on the details of the conversation between the [angel](angels.html) of [HaShem](hashem.html) and Yehoshua: “The [angel](angels.html) said to Yehoshua, ‘Yesterday, you missed bringing the afternoon (Tamid) [offering](korbanot). And tonight, you are idle from Torah studies.’ Yehoshua asked, ‘What is the main reason why you came?’ The [angel](angels.html) replied, ‘I came for the present’, indicating that the main reason was the laxity in Torah study. Immediately, Yehoshua went to study Torah.”

Although they had been fighting a fierce battle for [Jericho](stages.html), the [Jewish](gen-jew.html) soldiers were expected to return to their study of Torah at night, as soon as they could. To refrain from doing so was such a serious offence, that a Divine messenger was sent forth as an officer with a drawn sword, to [teach](teacher.html) that their failure to engage in Torah study made them vulnerable to be slain in combat.

As important as it is to fight the battles of [HaShem](hashem.html), in is even more important that we build our relationship with [HaShem](hashem.html) with the study of His Torah. The [Mishna](orallaw.html) [teaches](teacher.html) us that this Torah study is [one](one.html) of the pillars of the [world](worlds.html):

***Pirke Avot 1:2*** *The* [*world*](worlds.html) *stands on* [*three*](three.html) *things: Torah, service, and acts of loving kindness.*

Our Sages also [teach](teacher.html) that the study of Torah has additional [consequences](conseq.html) of its own.

***Pirke Avot 2:7*** *HE USED TO SAY: THE MORE FLESH, THE MORE WORMS; THE MORE PROPERTY, THE MORE ANXIETY; THE MORE WIVES, THE MORE WITCHCRAFT; THE MORE BONDWOMEN THE MORE LEWDNESS; THE MORE SLAVES, THE MORE ROBBERY; [BUT] THE MORE [STUDY OF THE] TORAH, THE MORE LIFE;[[61]](#footnote-61) THE MORE* [*SITTING*](mashal.html) *DOWN[[62]](#footnote-62) [TO STUDY AND CONTEMPLATE], THE MORE WISDOM;[[63]](#footnote-63) THE MORE COUNSEL, THE MORE UNDERSTANDING;[[64]](#footnote-64) THE MORE RIGHTEOUSNESS, THE MORE PEACE.* [*ONE*](one.html) *WHO HAS ACQUIRED UNTO HIMSELF A GOOD* [*NAME*](name.html)*, HAS ACQUIRED [IT] FOR HIMSELF;* [*ONE*](one.html) *WHO HAS ACQUIRED UNTO HIMSELF WORDS OF TORAH, HAS ACQUIRED FOR HIMSELF THE LIFE OF THE* [*WORLD*](futures.html) *TO COME.*

Thus we see that a person is built up through his study. In addition he build his [Olam HaBa](futures.html) and also he builds this [world](worlds.html). These temporal [consequences](conseq.html) cannot be ignored!

The [Gemara](orallaw.html) also [teaches](teacher.html) that failure to study Torah will lead to bad things happening. These things are all designed to spur us on to improve our Torah study in order to [teach](teacher.html), to perform the [mitzvot](cmds613.html), and to learn to love [HaShem](hashem.html).

***Berachoth 5a*** *If* [*one*](one.html) *has the opportunity to study the Torah and does not study it, the Holy* [*One*](one.html)*, blessed be He, visits him with ugly and painful sufferings which stir him up. For it is said: I was dumb with silence, I kept silence from the good thing, and my pain was stirred up.[[65]](#footnote-65) ‘The good thing’ refers only to the Torah, as it is said: For I give you good doctrine; forsake ye not My* [*teaching*](teacher.html)*.[[66]](#footnote-66)*

## Torah Scholars

This is an excerpt from a [letter](letters.html) written by R’ [Yitzchak](isaac.html) Hutner z”l (1906-1980), rosh yeshiva of Yeshiva Chaim Berlin in Brooklyn, N.Y. In the [letter](letters.html), dated 24 Tevet 5723 [1963] and printed in Pachad [Yitzchak](isaac.html): Igrot no. 38, he discusses, among other things, the [mitzvah](cmds613.html) to judge another person favorably. He writes:

All of this refers to an act committed by a person about whom there are arguments to judge his act as lacking [merit](merit.html) and arguments to judge it as having [merit](merit.html); then, the [mitzva](cmds613.html),[[67]](#footnote-67) “With righteousness you shall judge your fellow,” obligates us to weigh the side of [merit](merit.html) more heavily based on the quality of the person himself [i.e., [one](one.html) does not have to judge favorably a person [known](daat.html) to be [wicked](wicked.html)]. However, once we [know](daat.html) that a clearly bad deed has been done, then we are under no obligation to judge favorably and to assume that the damage has been repaired. This rule has an exception, which is that if the person in question qualifies as a Torah scholar, then we have a [halacha](walking.html),[[68]](#footnote-68) “If you saw a Torah scholar [sin](sin.html) in the night-[time](time.html), do not think anything of him the next day, for he has certainly repented.” This is a novelty with respect to the usual application of the [mitzvah](cmds613.html) of “With righteousness you shall judge your fellow,” i.e., that even after the bad deed has been done, there is an obligation to judge favorably and assume that there has been repentance. This obligation to weigh the side of [merit](merit.html) more heavily in this situation applies only to [judging] a Torah scholar. No amount of righteousness creates such an obligation. This means that, though the general obligation to judge a person favorably depends on the righteousness of the person being judged, as explained above, nevertheless, that is only before we [know](daat.html) that he did a bad deed. . . But after the bad deed was done, no amount of righteousness that a person has requires us to presume he has repented. Only the fact that there is Torah within him obligates us to judge him favorably.

This is [one](one.html) of the attributes that Torah [study] has over other [mitzvot](cmds613.html), for being righteous [with regard to [mitzvot](cmds613.html) in general] does not create a presumption of repentance. This may be inferred from the words of Rabbeinu Yonah, who writes,[[69]](#footnote-69) “Delaying repentance is found only among amei ha’aretz, people lacking Torah [knowledge](knowledge.html)”. He did not write that delaying repentance is found among [wicked](wicked.html) people or among simpletons or among impetuous people. Certainly, the doors of repentance are open to all, but a certainty that repentance has been done exists only vis-a-vis Torah scholars.

# The Goal Of Torah Study

Why should [one](one.html) study Torah?

On should study Torah because it is *only* through Torah that [one](one.html) can fulfill the [one](one.html) [commandment](cmds613.html) that is the end goal of the entire Torah: The love of [HaShem](hashem.html). Why should [one](one.html) study Torah? Because the study brings man close to The Source of all reality, the Creator of the Universe. Why should [one](one.html) study Torah? Because through the study of Torah man attains the highest possible state of human existence, the very purpose for which he was created.

***Pirke Avot 2:14*** *R. ELEAZAR SAID: BE EAGER TO STUDY THE TORAH; AND* [*KNOW*](daat.html) *WHAT ANSWER THOU SHOULDST GIVE TO THE EPICUREAN,[[70]](#footnote-70) AND* [*KNOW*](daat.html) *BEFORE WHOM THOU TOllEST,[[71]](#footnote-71) AND WHO IS THINE EMPLOYER WHO WILL PAY THEE THE REWARD OF THY LABOUR.*

Further, we learn in order to perform the [commandments](cmds613.html) and to [teach](teacher.html) them to others, as we shall see in the next section. The Nazarean Codicil[[72]](#footnote-72) agrees with this assessment.

***Matityahu 28:18-20*** *And* [*Yeshua*](yeshua.html) *came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in* [*heaven*](heaven.html) *and in earth. 19 Go ye therefore, and* [*teach*](teacher.html) *all* [*nations*](nations.html)*, immersing them in the* [*name*](name.html)([authority](authority.html)) *of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: 20* [*Teaching*](teacher.html) *them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the* [*world*](worlds.html)*. Amen.*

As we learned earlier, [one](one.html) should study the Torah in order to [teach](teacher.html). [One](one.html) should learn Torah in order to perform the [mitzvot](cmds613.html). The Master’s disciples could not go and [teach](teacher.html) the [world](worlds.html) to observe the [mitzvot](cmds613.html) if they had not spent a considerable amount of [time](time.html) studying the Torah and using the teachings of [Yeshua](yeshua.html) to craft the Torah into the [world](worlds.html) changing device that it is supposed to be. [One](one.html) can not make a talmid, disciple, unless [one](one.html) has learned Torah well enough that he can [teach](teacher.html) others and lead a life that his talmidim can imitate and they reflect the teachings of their [teacher](teacher.html) in the [world](worlds.html).

[Yeshua](yeshua.html) [taught](teacher.html) us that we are to follow Him. We are to imitate Him. Without diligent Torah study it is impossible to follow and imitate Him. It is *impossible*! If we are to built into the [body](body.html) of [Mashiach](mashiach.html),[[73]](#footnote-73) we must imitate the Master. We must demonstrate our mastery of Torah through study, acts of serve, and deeds of lovingkindness.

There is no shortcut to [HaShem](hashem.html)’s goal for us. There is no shortcut to [Mashiach](mashiach.html)’s goals for us. We must study Torah left, right, and center! There is no other way to reach the ultimate goal: Loving [HaShem](hashem.html) our G-d!

# [Laws](law.html) of Torah Study

The Rambam begins his discussion of the [laws](law.html) of Torah study (Hilchot [Talmud](orallaw.html) Torah), by telling us that women[[74]](#footnote-74) and minors are exempt from Torah study. However, a man (and not a woman) is obligated to [teach](teacher.html) his son as we learned at the beginning of this study, in the [Shema](shema.html).

***Hilchot*** [***Talmud***](orallaw.html) ***Torah 1:01*** *Women, slaves and minors are exempt from* [*Talmud*](orallaw.html) *Torah. However, regarding a minor, his father is obligated to* [*teach*](teacher.html) *him Torah, as it says: “And you shall* [*teach*](teacher.html) *them to your sons to* [*speak*](mashal.html) *them” (Devarim [Deuteronomy] 11:19) A woman is not obligated to* [*teach*](teacher.html) *her son; because anyone who is obligated to study is obligated to* [*teach*](teacher.html)*.*

We learn from this curious beginning, that the Rambam intended for us to learn that the primary purpose of Torah study is to do the [mitzvot](cmds613.html)[[75]](#footnote-75) and to [teach](teacher.html) others what we have learned. Torah’s continuation in the [world](worlds.html) depends on the transmission of Torah from [teacher](teacher.html) to talmid (student). Without this oral transmission, Torah will cease in this [world](worlds.html).

It seems to be a fitting conclusion to this study that we should encourage those who have studied the Torah, to do the [mitzvot](cmds613.html) and to [teach](teacher.html) what they have learned, in order to Love [HaShem](hashem.html) our G-d. This is the primary purpose of Torah study, as we see in the [Shema](shema.html):

***Devarim (Deuteronomy) 6:4-9*** *Hear* ([Shema](shema.html))*, O Israel:* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *our God* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *is* [*one*](one.html)*. 5 And thou shalt love* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *thy God with all thine* [*heart*](body.html)*, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. 6 And these words, which I* [*command*](cmds613.html) *thee this day, shall be in thine* [*heart*](body.html)*: 7 And thou shalt* [*teach*](teacher.html) *them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. 8 And thou shalt bind them for a* [*sign*](signs.html) *upon thine* [*hand*](fourteen.html)*, and they shall be as frontlets between thine* [*eyes*](body.html)*. 9 And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.*

I am writing this as we count the [forty](forty.html)-[eighth](eight.html) day of the [omer](omer.html). This is an auspicious [time](time.html) to revise our studies as we prepare for the most momentous day in the history of the [world](worlds.html): [Shavuot](shavuot.html), the day we were given the Torah!

May [HaShem](hashem.html) bless and magnify our Torah study! Amen V’Amen!

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**\* \* \***

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1. Torah is commonly understood to refer to the first [five](five.html) books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Some use this term to apply to the whole Tanach (the so called Old Testament). In its broadest sense, Torah refers to the whole written and [oral Torah](orallaw.html). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Maharal [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Mitzvot – the commands, the deeds, of [HaShem](hashem.html). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Chapters 11 & 12 of Hilchot Melachim from the Mishneh Torah of the Rambam. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Yehoshua (Joshua) 1:8 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Mishneh Torah, Laws of Torah Study 1:8-9 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Devarim (Deuteronomy) 5:1 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Explained as a master to supply one with [knowledge](knowledge.html) already existing. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Explained as a companion for studying together, so that one may be able to note what the other misses, or to supply information not known to the other. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Devarim (Deuteronomy) 6:4ff [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Rashi [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. see Mishnah Berurah 155:4 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Kovetz Shiurim, Vol. 2, no. 11 [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Mishneh Torah, Laws of Torah Study 1:8 [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Torat Ha'odom [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Ideal conditions for study are fixity of purpose, regularity of habits and stability of temperament on the part of the student, as well as an habitual locale and students’ accessories of suitable and standard types. B. cites another rendering, viz., ‘Make thy (decisions in) Law consistent’. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. This advice on the part of Shammai is the more noteworthy in view of his own impatient nature (as compared with Hillel's at any rate). [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. In the next [world](worlds.html). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Yesod Mora 1995, 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Talmud Torah = Torah study. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Yehoshua (Joshua) 1:8 [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. The Torah contains no minimum requirement for Torah study. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Shulchan Aruch Harav3:6 [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Who ruled that if the old Shewbread was on the table for some time in the morning and the new for some time in the evening, that can be said to be ‘continually’. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Yehoshua (Joshua) 1:8 [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. The passage commencing ‘Hear, O Israel’ (Devarim 6:4ff). [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Plur. ‘of ‘am ha-arez, v. Glos. Such a pronouncement might deter the common people from educating their children in the study of the Torah, seeing that the Scriptural precept is fulfilled by the twice daily recital of the Shema’. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. For they would argue thus: if merely for the recital of the [Shema’](shema.html) twice daily the reward is offered: ‘Then thou shalt make thy ways prosperous and then thou shalt have good success’ (Yehoshua ibid.), how great shall be the reward for those that devote their whole time to the study of the Torah! [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Yochanan (John) 1:1 [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Derech HaShem, Part 1, Chap. 4, no. 9 [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. I.e., seeking a favorable interpretation of his actions, even when they look suspicious. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Not merely alms-giving. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Pe'ah 1:1 [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Shabbat 11a [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Hakhamim = Rabbis [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. I.e., for which he has an aptitude, or to which his mood is attuned. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Tehillim (Psalms) 1:2 [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. I.e., the Torah. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Mishlei (Proverbs) 7:15 [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Weshinnantam < shannen, to be keen. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Prov. VII, 4; be as clear in your wisdom — i.e., learning — as in the [knowledge](knowledge.html) that your sister is interdicted to you. Or possibly the deduction is from the second half of the verse: and call understanding thy familiar friend — i.e., be fully versed and familiar therein. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Mishlei (Proverbs) 7:3 [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. The disciples, Tehillim (Psalms) 127:4 [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. The scholars, Ibid. 120:4 [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Tehillim (Psalms) 45:6 [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Tehillim (Psalms) 127:5 [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Devarim 4:9; Menachoth 99b [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Mal. III, 18 [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. A silver coin, quarter of a shekel, and equal to a denar, v. Glos. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. ‘Rabbi’ of the foregoing Mishna. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Cf. Ps. CXXVIII. 2, then thou [eatest](eating.html) the labour of thy hands, happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Since, on account of not having an occupation by which to earn a steady livelihood, he has to seek the latter at random, he thus uses up time which he could otherwise have devoted to the study of the Torah. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Unable to procure a livelihood by honest means, he would be tempted, or driven to, dishonest means of obtaining it. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. The study hall [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Shabbat 10a [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Deut. VI, 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Another reading ‘[teach](teacher.html)’, i.e., one who refuses to impart the [knowledge](knowledge.html) he has. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. The Shem ha-meforash, the [Name](name.html) of God in its full form (I ARN, Ch. XII). 2. ‘The Crown of God’, i.e., a man who claims divine honours and prerogatives (II ARN, Ch. XXVII). [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Megillah 3a [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. prov. III, 1, 2. My son, forget not my [teaching](teacher.html) (Torah) but let thy [heart](body.html) keep my commandments; for length of days, and years of life, will they add to thee. Cf. ibid. IX, II, and Deut. XXX, 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Some render ‘academy’, ‘school(ing)’ i.e., the more opportunities given to disciples for corporate study, the greater the ingenuity developed. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Some versions ‘the greater the wisdom of the [teacher](teacher.html), the better attended will be his school’ (v. R. Jonah and B.). [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Cf. Prov. XII, 15, rendered, he that hearkeneth to counsel is wise. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Tehillim (Psalms) 39:3. E.V. ‘I held my peace, had no comfort, and my pain was held in check’. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Mishlei (Proverbs) 4:2. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Vayikra (Leviticus) 19:15 [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Berachot 19a [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. in Sha’arei Teshuvah I 3 [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. A term applied to heretics in general, v. Sanh. (Sonc. ed.) p. 244, n. 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. ‘but know . . .’ Whilst you are studying the creeds of others, know, keep in mind, that He whom you are serving knows your innermost thoughts and so take care to prevent false doctrines from influencing you. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. The so called New Testament. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. I am using Mashiach without further qualification, to apply to Mashiach ben [Joseph](joseph.html), which is not the normal Jewish way. The normal Jewish way is to that ‘mashiach’ without qualification always applies to Mashiach ben David only. See Rambam’s *Hilchot Melachim*. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. They are obligated to learn the [halachot](walking.html) of the commands that apply to them: [Sabbath](sabbath.html), family purity, kashrut, and the sanctification of time. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. The commandments [↑](#footnote-ref-75)