

The Mitzvah to Study Torah

Who, What, When, and Why?

Genesis 47:28

וַיְחִי יַעֲקֹב בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם שִׁבְעַת עָשָׂר שָׁנָה

And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt for seventeen years

Maimonides: Positive Commandment #11

The 11th *mitzvah* is that we are commanded to study and to teach the wisdom of Torah. This is called *Talmud Torah*. The source of this commandment is G-d's statement, "Teach them to your children."

The *Sifri* says, "The phrase, 'Teach them to your children,' refers to your students. One similarly finds all over that students are called children, as it is written, 'And the children [i.e. the students] of the prophets went out.'" Our Sages also said there, "The word, 'Teach them,' signifies that they should be sharp in your mouth; that when someone asks you something, you should not stammer, but rather answer him immediately."

This commandment is repeated numerous times: "Learn them," "Do them," "So that you will learn them." This commandment is stressed and encouraged in various passages spread throughout the Talmud.

Mishnah Torah Laws of Talmud Torah 1:1

A father is obligated to teach his son Torah while he is a minor, as [Deuteronomy 11:19] states: "And you shall teach them to your sons to speak about them."