



# THE LIST IS HERE

By Rabbi Yaakov Aichenbaum with Rabbi Dovid Freeman

*The List*, however, is not just a list of frequent words. The words are referenced in the order that they appear in the Chumash and the exact *perek* and *passuk* are mentioned as well. English and Yiddish translations are also provided for each word. This format facilitates systematic and coordinated instruction of vocabulary. Each teacher will know what words have been previously taught and need to be reviewed. They will also know which words have to be taught for the first time.

*Mechanchim* have been enthusiastic about our workshops and our methods of teaching Chumash. In order to make our methodologies more accessible to *mechanchim*, *The List* also contains a comprehensive teacher's manual that details the salient points of our Chumash workshop. In addition, *The List* comes with an interactive CD that contains a potpourri of workbook samples, pdf files to make flashcards of the frequent words that are on the list, and classroom videos of various elements of our program.

Our Chumash program is not meant to replace your own methodologies or *mesorah* of Chumash instruction. Rather, it is meant to supplement and enhance what you are already doing. In addition, whatever time is invested into our program will be earned back in the long-term both in quality and quantity. There are two unique features of our program that contribute to its success: systematic/explicit instruction and overlearning.

## SYSTEMATIC INSTRUCTION

The Gemara teaches us that it is difficult to learn if the material is not organized. Likewise, it is difficult for students to learn skills and vocabulary if they are not taught in a preplanned sequential manner that continuously reinforces and builds upon previous skills. Also, the acquisition of language skills is greatly enhanced when they are taught explicitly and not be left up to the student to figure out from the context or through osmosis. As was previously mentioned, our word list is arranged according to the first appearance of each word in the Chumash. This promotes the systematic instruction and review of vocabulary. Our teacher's manual describes how to explicitly teach vocabulary and other language skills during the course of your regular Chumash instruction in an interesting and empowering manner.

## AUTOMATICITY AND OVERLEARNING

The Torah teaches us that the retrieval of the Torah that we learned should be automatic and instantaneous. Likewise, fluent translation of the Chumash requires that the words and language of the Chumash will be processed instantly. When fluency is absent, mental energy must be expended on translation and the amount of active working memory that is left for comprehension and higher level thinking is thereby decreased.

The Torah also teaches us the method to achieve this: overlearning. Overlearning is the practice of an already mastered skill past the

At the 2008 Torah Umesorah convention four years ago, Rabbi Dovid Freeman and I started lecturing about the topic of enabling every child to be able to translate *passukim* in Chumash accurately and fluently. Since then, we have presented dozens of workshops at schools, national conferences, and teacher training programs on this topic. Also, our workshops have been downloaded thousands of times from chinuch.org. As a result, we have had the wonderful opportunity to network and collaborate with outstanding *mechanchim* from across the *chinuch* world.

The most frequent question that we are asked is if a comprehensive list of frequent Chumash words is available. Until now, our answer was in the negative. We can now answer with a definitive "yes." *The List* is here! It took many months to go through and analyze every word in Chumash. With the help of three concordances, I composed a list of approximately 1000 frequent words. These words comprise approximately 87% of all the words in Chumash. Proper nouns are another 9%. Only 4% of the 79,847 words in the Chumash did not make the frequent word list.



point that is necessary for retention or recall. Overlearning promotes a shift from the conscious to the subconscious and helps the response to become automatic and internalized. The Gemara explains that we cannot compare a person who reviews something even a hundred times to someone who reviews it one hundred and one times. This is not only true in the quantity of the information that will be remembered, but also in the quality of the information. Overlearning promotes greater understanding and comprehension on many different levels.

In order for overlearning to have the maximum effect, the skill should be practiced even *after* the word is mastered. Also, it should be practiced during many sessions over an extended period of time. Finally, skills or words that were already totally mastered should be interspersed with newer ones during review. This interspersion actually facilitates the learning of new words and skills.

Overlearning is a feature that our program excels in. It relies upon a tremendous amount of review. Each word is literally reviewed 50-100 times throughout the year in a variety of creative ways. The students thrive on this review and almost all of our students have consistently mastered close to 90% (or more) of a large amount of vocabulary words. Furthermore, most of this vocabulary is retained as they progress from grade to grade.

Once this system is in place, children are able to transfer their knowledge to the actual *passukim* and they are able to appreciate the nuances of the language, understand Rashi's question, etc. Less class time is ultimately spent on actual translation since the students' vocabulary is so strong. As a result, Rabbi Freeman has been able to focus more on comprehension. Another fringe benefit has been that a significantly greater amount of *passukim* is finished each year.

The public premier of *The List* will be held, *b'ezras Hashem*, at the Yachad National Staff Development Conference on November 6<sup>th</sup> at Yeshivat Noam in Paramus, NJ. We will present a two-part workshop about *The List* and we will also be available to discuss

the program with *mechanchim*. Conference information can be obtained from Mrs. Batya Jacob at (551) 404-4447 or [batyaj@ou.org](mailto:batyaj@ou.org). You can contact me about *The List* at (570)342-7998 or [ryathelist@gmail.com](mailto:ryathelist@gmail.com).

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