

המדריך
אין כותבים
חידושי תורה

— תדפיס - שער ב. פרק א —

איגוד ישיבות ליובאוויטש
שבט תשפ"ו

PART TWO

Beginner Track

For Bochorim who are new to writing Inyonim in Torah

Question · Answer · Proof · Conclusion

סיכום · ראיה · תשובה · שאלה

Contents

At a Glance: What You Will Do ... **3**

Chapter 3: The Four Steps ... **4**

Step 1 — The Question (שאלה) ... **5**

Step 2 — Your Answer (תשובה) ... **7**

Step 3 — Proof (ראיה) ... **8**

Step 4 — Conclusion (סיכום) ... **10**

Writing Template ... **11**

At a Glance: What You Will Do

The beginner track teaches you to write a clear, focused Torah insight in 500 to 750 words. Every piece follows the same four steps:

- **Ask a Question (שאלה)** — Find a specific contradiction or difficulty in the sources. Cite exact locations.
- **Propose an Answer (תשובה)** — State your chidush clearly and show how it solves the problem.
- **Prove It (ראיה)** — Bring evidence: from a text, from logic, from comparison, or from a mefaresh.
- **Conclude (סיכום)** — Restate briefly and show why it matters: a broader principle, a practical application, or a deeper insight.

Think of this as training yourself to notice questions, work through them step by step, and explain your thinking to others. The template is rigid on purpose. Once the structure becomes second nature, you can adapt it.

The Four Steps

Question, Answer, Proof, Conclusion

Every beginner piece follows four steps in order. Below, each step is explained with an example built in. For complete worked-out examples, see Appendix A.

Step 1: The Question (שאלה)

This is what you are trying to figure out.

For beginners, the best questions fall into two main types: (1) a contradiction between two sources, and (2) a difficulty — something that does not make sense or seems unnecessary in a text. (There are other types too, which we cover in Part Six when we discuss writing on different subjects.) Pick one specific question and write one paragraph (four to six sentences) that introduces the topic, gives Source A with its exact location, gives Source B or the difficulty, and explains the problem.

A note before the examples: The topic we are about to use — Birkas HaTorah and oiver l'asiyasan — is a well-known discussion in the poskim. We are not presenting it as an original chidush. We are using it because it is a sugya you can look up and check yourself, and because it is an excellent example to show you how the four-step structure works. Think of this like watching a slow-motion replay of a play in a game — the point is to see the mechanics clearly.

*We are also going to show you something important: **the same topic can be approached with two different types of questions**, and the type of question you ask changes the whole direction of the piece. Watch how this works.*

Method 1: The Contradiction Question (קשיא)

A contradiction question points to two sources that do not fit together and asks: how do we resolve this?

Inline example:

“The Gemara in Brachos (11b) says that a person must say Birkas HaTorah before learning Torah each day. Rashi explains this is a ‘birkas ha’mitzvah’ — a bracha said before doing a mitzvah, just like the bracha before matzah or lulav. There is a well-known rule that birkas ha’mitzvos must be said ‘over l’asiyasan’ — right before the act, with no break. Indeed, the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 47:9) rules that we say pesukim and mishnayos right after Birkas HaTorah — showing that over l’asiyasan does apply.

Yet the Shulchan Aruch (47:10) also rules that if someone sleeps during the day, he does NOT need a new Birkas HaTorah — the Mishnah Berurah explains that ‘ha’chiyuv tamid alav,’ the obligation is constant. This seems like a contradiction: if Birkas HaTorah follows over l’asiyasan (as 47:9 shows), it should behave like a regular birkas ha’mitzvah. But if it is really a ‘constant obligation’ (as 47:10 says), why do we need to say pesukim right after the bracha at all?”

Notice what this does: it finds a real contradiction — between two rulings of the same Shulchan Aruch (47:9 and 47:10). One implies Birkas HaTorah is a regular birkas ha’mitzvah with over l’asiyasan. The other implies the obligation is constant and never expires. These two ideas pull in different directions, and that tension is the question.

Method 2: The Difficulty Question (קושיא on a single source)

A difficulty question does not need two contradicting sources. It points to something in the text that seems strange, unnecessary, or hard to understand, and asks: why?

Inline example:

“The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 47:9) rules that after saying Birkas HaTorah, a person should immediately learn something — and we therefore say the pesukim of Birkas Kohanim, the Mishnah of Eilu Devarim, and the Braisa of Eilu Devarim. This is to fulfill the requirement of ‘over l’asiyasan’ — saying the bracha right before the act.

But this seems difficult: the mitzvah of Talmud Torah, as the Rambam (Hilchos Talmud Torah 1:8) writes, is ‘by day and by night’ — a constant, ongoing obligation. If the mitzvah is truly constant, and the bracha covers the whole day (as the Mishnah Berurah on 47:10 explains), why is there any need for over l’asiyasan at all? Why do we need to learn something right away?”

Notice the difference: this question is not a contradiction between two sources. It is a difficulty within the logic of a single halacha. If the obligation is constant, over

l'asiyasan should be automatic — yet the Shulchan Aruch still requires you to learn something immediately. That “why?” is the question.

Both methods are valid. They lead to different analyses and different answers. The contradiction method pushes you to find a distinction or a deeper principle that resolves the tension. The difficulty method pushes you to understand the reasoning behind what the source is doing. As you develop as a writer, you will naturally start to see which method fits the sugya you are working with.

(Note: For writing on Halacha, Chumash, Chassidus, and other subjects, the types of questions are different. See Part Six for subject-specific guidance.)

Step 2: Your Answer (תשובה)

Using the Contradiction Method

This is your chidush – your insight that resolves the difficulty.

Your answer should explain how the difficulty is resolved. Common types of answers include: a distinction (chiluk) between cases, a reinterpretation of one of the sources, or a hidden principle that explains both. Write one to two paragraphs (five to eight sentences) that state your answer clearly, explain how it works step by step, and show how it solves the original question.

Inline example (answering the contradiction question above):

“The answer is that Birkas HaTorah has a dual nature. On one hand, it is a birkas ha’mitzvah — and like all birkas ha’mitzvos, it requires over l’asiyasan. That is why the Shulchan Aruch (47:9) requires learning immediately after the bracha. On the other hand, the mitzvah of Talmud Torah is unique: the obligation is constant (‘by day and by night’). Because of this, once the bracha is said with proper over l’asiyasan (by learning the pesukim and mishnayos), it does not expire for the rest of the day — even if you stop learning for hours.

The bracha ‘attaches’ through over l’asiyasan and then ‘extends’ because of the continuous obligation. This resolves the contradiction: 47:9 tells us how the bracha is established (through over l’asiyasan). 47:10 tells us why it does not need to be repeated (because the obligation is constant).”

✓ *Tip: Start with a clear statement (“The answer is that...”). Do not be too wishy-washy (“I think maybe possibly...”).*

Step 3: Proof (ראיה)

Why should someone believe you?

Your proof shows that your answer is based on sources or logic, not just guessing. Use at least one type of proof (two is better): textual proof (specific words in the sources), logical proof (why your answer makes sense), comparative proof (the same idea appears elsewhere), or authority proof (a mefaresh says the same thing).

Inline example:

“Tosafos (Brachos 11b, d"h ‘shekvar’) cites Rabbeinu Tam who explains that ‘divrei Torah ein tzrichin chizuk’ — Torah words do not need ‘strengthening’ or renewal. The obligation carries forward on its own. This fits our explanation: once established through over l’asiyasan, the bracha extends because the mitzvah never ends.

Separately, the Beis Yosef (Orach Chaim 47:11) cites the Agur (Siman 1) who adds another angle: a person is never truly disconnected from Torah, because even everyday activities involve following halacha. Together, these two sources confirm that the bracha does not expire during the day — both because the obligation is inherently continuous (Rabbeinu Tam) and because a person is always connected to Torah in practice (the Agur).

Further support: the Shulchan Aruch treats sleep during the day differently from hefsek in other brachos. For most birkas ha’mitzvos, a long break would require a new bracha. But for Birkas HaTorah, even daytime sleep does not — because the chiyuv remains in force.”

✓ *Tip: Always cite specifically and connect your evidence clearly to your answer: “This shows that...”*

Citing Multiple Sources That Support the Same Point

Notice something in the proof above. We brought two sources — Tosafos/Rabbeinu Tam and the Agur — that both support our answer. But they make different arguments. Rabbeinu Tam says the obligation of Torah is inherently continuous and does not need renewal. The Agur says a person is never disconnected from Torah because even everyday life involves following halacha. Same conclusion, different reasoning.

When this happens, **do not lump them together** as if they are saying the same thing. Cite each one separately, with its own location, and explain what each one adds. This does two things for your piece:

- First, it makes your proof stronger — two independent arguments are more convincing than one.
- Second, it shows the reader (and your reviewer) that you actually looked up the sources and understand the difference between them.

*A common mistake is to remember an idea, remember roughly where you saw it, and attribute the wrong words to the wrong source. **The fix is simple: before you submit, open the sefer and check that it says what you think it says, in the place you think it is.** This takes a few extra minutes. It is worth it.*

Step 4: Conclusion (סיכום)

Wrap it up and leave a clear impression.

Your conclusion should be short but strong. Briefly restate your question (one sentence). Remind the reader of your answer (one sentence). End with impact — show the broader principle, a practical application, a deeper insight, or what this leads to next.

Inline example:

“We asked how Birkas HaTorah can follow the rules of over l’asiyasan (requiring immediate learning after the bracha) while also being described as a bracha over a ‘constant obligation’ that never expires. We answered that it has two elements: it is established through over l’asiyasan, but it extends through the entire day because of the unique, ongoing nature of the mitzvah of Talmud Torah. This teaches us something about the nature of Torah learning itself: it is both something we do at specific moments and something we are at all times.”

Writing Template

Use this structure for your first attempts

[YOUR TITLE: Topic or Question You Are Addressing]

By: [Your Name] | Yeshiva: [Name] | Date: [Date] | Masechta/Topic: [What you were learning]

INTRODUCTION (2-3 sentences)

When learning [topic], an interesting question comes up. [One sentence setting the stage.]

THE QUESTION (4-6 sentences)

The Gemara says [Source A with exact location]. However, [Source B with exact location] seems to say [something different]. The question is: [state your question in one sentence].

MY ANSWER (5-8 sentences)

The answer is [your chidush]. According to this, [apply to Source A]. [Apply to Source B]. This solves our question because [connect back].

PROOF (4-5 sentences)

We can see support from [specific evidence]. Notice that [specific details]. This shows that [connect to your answer].

CONCLUSION (2-3 sentences)

We asked [brief restatement]. We answered [brief restatement]. [End strong: broader principle, application, or insight.]

Word count: 500 to 750 words.