

SEEKING GUIDANCE (III)

Learning from their Ways

Chazal teach that a person should associate himself with Torah scholars as much as possible, for thus he will learn from their ways.

The author of *Sefer HaChinuch* writes that connecting to *talmidei chachomim* upholds the entire Torah, and is a strong foundation to help the *neshamah*. A person who is ordinarily in the company of *talmidei chachomim* will be held back from transgressing, *chas veshalom*. As Shlomo HaMelech writes, "He who goes together with wisdom will become wise."

(רמב"ם הל' דעות פ"ו ה"ב, ס' החינוך תל"ד)

Surprisingly, the Torah identifies Elisha HaNavi not as the foremost disciple of Eliyahu who received Torah teachings from him, but as "the one who poured water over the hands of Eliyahu." From this we see that serving *talmidei chachomim* is even more valuable than learning from them. Besides the *zechus* of helping them, it is specifically through such contact that one can receive guidance on how to live one's daily life.

(ברכות ז ע"ב, מחזור ויטרי תכט)

The Friediker Rebbe related: During the time of the *Tzemach Tzedek*, one could find *eltere chassidim* visiting Lubavitch year round. The younger *chassidim* would service them ("*shimush*"), and this enabled them to watch the *eltere chassidim* daven, eat, learn and interact with others.

Very often this would impact the young *chassidim* even more than their own study of *Chassidus*. As Chazal say, "Being of service to Torah sages is superior even to Torah study," for study produces a learned person, whereas *shimush* produces an *oved HaShem* and a *chossid*.

(לקו"ד ח"ד ע' תרפח)

On another occasion the Friediker Rebbe related: In the past, *yungeleit* would spend time in the close company of *eltere chassidim*. The *eltere chassidim* would repay the gratitude that they owed to their own *madrichim*, by now relaying to the *yungeleit*

what they had received many years earlier. This contact is what made a *chossid*; this contact is what made a true *chassidische* gathering.

(סה"ש ה"ש"י"ת ע' 354)

Vital Direction

In תש"ט (1949) the Friediker Rebbe bemoaned the fact that young *chassidim* were lacking guidance. It is unfortunate, he said, that the young *chassidim* refrain from observing the *eltere chassidim* who themselves had learned to appreciate the preciousness of an *eltere chossid*. Even a *talmid* who is successful in his studies and in his own character refinement needs a great deal of *shimush* before he is fit to guide others. As *chassidim* were wont to say, "An *eltere chossid* has more mellow sense than a *yungerman* who is a *maskil* and an *oved*."

In my youth I saw how the really young *chassidim* were delighted when an *eltere chossid* took an interest in them. It did not matter whether the budding *chossid* was told a warm word or a stern one, since he knew that it was preparing him to be able to absorb the *Chabad-chassidische* education into the very roots of his soul.

With such a *chinuch*, the *chassidische* child rose from level to level, enabling him in time to raise his own *Chabad-chassidische* family.

(לקו"ד ח"ג ע' 1006)

In the winter of תש"י (1950), the Friediker Rebbe discussed the necessity for *chassidische* guidance. He said: "Nowadays, many *chassidim* are completely off track. It is often the loud youngsters, lightheaded and spiritually insensitive, who arrogantly jump to the head table, and thus they remain naked – without a knowledge of *Chassidus*, and even without *middos tovos* and a *geshmak* in *davening*. For, as the age-old *chassidic* saying goes, 'Everyone needs *chinuch*, even a Rebbe who is the son of a Rebbe and the grandson of a Rebbe.'"

(סה"ש ה"ש"י"ת ע' 350)

The Rebbe Rashab told his son, the Friediker

Rebbe: One must spend time in the close company of elder *chassidim* (*raibn-zich arum eltere chassidim*). When I was younger I would spend time with Reb Shmuel Ber and Reb Chaim Ber during the few weeks that they spent in Lubavitch. I then spent three-quarters of a year applying what they spoke about.

(רשימות היומן ע' תסא)

Studying their Conduct

Reb Michael Beliner, the legendary *mashpia*, is fondly remembered by oldtimers from Lubavitch as Reb Michael *der Alter* ("old Reb Michael"). When he grew frail, the yeshiva administrator suggested to the Rebbe Rashab that he no longer be paid a salary. The Rebbe told him, "In my eyes, the fact that the *bochurim* can gaze at him is worth a salary. He is an image of an *alter chossid*."

(Incidentally, some *chassidim* understood that phrase to intimate that Reb Michael was equal in standing to a vintage *chossid* of the *Alter Rebbe*....)

(לשמע און ע' 103)

One storekeeper in the town of Lubavitch would close his shop every Monday and Thursday morning so that he could go and hear the elder *chossid* Reb Hendel saying *VeHu Rachum* through his tears.

(לשמע און ע' 110)

CONSIDER THIS!

- How does one receive guidance through serving the *eltere chassidim*? Why can't it be acquired from hearing them teach Torah?

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OUR HEROES



Reb Elimelech of Lizhensk

Reb Elimelech was one of the greatest *talmidim* of the Mezritcher Maggid, and after the Maggid's *histalkus*, he became responsible for the dissemination of Chassidus in Poland. He was a brother of the famous Reb Zusha of Anipoli, and together they were known as "the holy brothers". He was one of the greatest Rebbes of his time, and many of his disciples became Rebbes in their own right, his primary successor being the Chozeh of Lublin. His teachings were printed in the *sefer Noam Elimelech*. He passed away in Lizhensk on the 21st of Adar תקמ"ז (1787).

The Alter Rebbe once met with a *rov* who was an opponent of Chassidus. The *rov* asked the Alter Rebbe, "I have a *sefer* called *Noam Elimelech* which as I have discovered, has been written by a *chossid*, a disciple of the Maggid of Mezritsch, and I put the *sefer* under the bench. Can you tell me something worthy about its author?"

The Alter Rebbe replied, "Even if you would put the *tzaddik* of Lizhensk himself under your bench, he would remain silent and not say a word. Such was his humility!"

(בית רבי ע' סג)

The brothers Reb Elimelech and Reb Zusha took upon themselves to go into *golus* (self-inflicted exile), and so they wandered from village to village, dressed in simple rags, with no one knowing who they were. During the course of their travels, whenever they would come to the town of Ludmir, they would stay by a certain Reb Aharon, who was a great man but lived quite poorly.

Years later, when Reb Elimelech and Reb Zushe had become well known, they once again traveled to Ludmir. This time, however, they did not travel by foot, but with a horse and buggy and an entourage of *chassidim*.

When they reached a village near Ludmir, one of the wealthy men in town came out to greet them and invite them to stay with him for the course of their visit. The bothers suggested that he return to Ludmir and they would arrive on their own.

When they arrived, they headed to the home of the poor Reb Aharon. When the wealthy man heard about it, he came running and complained, "Why did you not accept my offer?" To which one of the brothers replied, "We are the same people as before, and we don't want to change our lodgings. The only difference between then and now is the horse and buggy. If that's what inspired you to invite us, take the horse and buggy and let them stay with you..."

In memory of Basye Ester bas Pesach Chaim, Blima bas Yakov Hillel and Naftoli ben Avraham

A MOMENT WITH THE REBBE

Relevant to the Current *Hanhala*

Reb Gershon Shusterman relates:

In a Montreal hospital, on a routine *mitvzeyim* trip, some *bochurim* chanced upon an elderly *Yid*. He received them warmly, and surprised them by divulging that he had studied in the original Tomchei Temimim in the town of Lubavitch during the 5670's (1910's).

With great emotion, he described those days of his youth: the atmosphere of purity, sincerity and devotion under the Rebbe Rashab's care. With remorse, the old man explained that due to his misconduct, the *hanhala* of the *yeshiva* had expelled him, and the rest of his life he had spent far from his roots.

"Please," begged the bedridden former-*tomim*, "tell the present Lubavitcher Rebbe that I regret my behavior. I want to apologize to Lubavitch."

The *bochurim* dutifully fulfilled his request, but were taken aback by the Rebbe's response: The Rebbe refused to bear responsibility for accepting the apology, since it was "the *inyan* (concern) of the current *hanhala* of the *yeshiva*."

(Avinu Malkeinu, p. 274)

לע"נ חנה בת ר' ישעי' ע"ה - יאהרצייט כ"ד אדר

A WAY OF LIFE

Rabbi Chaim Hillel Raskin
Moreh Hora'ah - Beis Hora'ah Rechovot

Maaser When In Debt

I am currently struggling with paying up debts. Am I obligated to give *maaser* of my earnings?

- The Torah obligates us to provide for those in need, and regardless of earnings one must give at least a third of a *shekel* each year (6.4 gram of silver – just over \$3 in today's market).¹ The source of the obligation to give a tenth of one's earnings to *tzedaka* (*maaser ksa'fim*) is disputed — whether it is from the Torah,² *midrabanan*,³ or just a good practice.⁴ The majority of *poskim* hold that it is a rabbinic obligation.
- If one comes to a financial state that he cannot take care of his basic needs (rent, food, clothing),⁵ some say that one's own needs take precedence (*chayecha kodmin*) and he is exempt from giving *tzedaka* altogether.⁶ Many others argue that *tzedaka* is an obligatory *mitzva* and must be performed by every Jew regardless of their financial state, and he may then collect his own needs from *tzedakah*.⁷ However, concerning *maaser*, all agree that one who cannot provide for his basic needs is exempt.
- If he has basic needs but is not financially stable, some say he must give *maaser* on what he receives (even if as a result he will have to collect more),⁸ while the majority of *poskim* contend that he is exempt since he is still dependent upon others (provided that he is not spending money on extras).⁹ Even after his finances improve he need not pay up past *maaser*.¹⁰
- There is no obligation to borrow or take a job in order to give *tzedaka*, and the *mitzvah* is only to give from what one has.¹¹ Likewise, one who has money but owes it to others, may repay his debts instead of giving *maaser*.¹² One should see to it that giving *maaser* won't delay the repayment of loans that are soon due.¹³
- Contemporary *acharonim* point out that large loans which are meant to be paid up over an extended period of time (mortgage, car payments) do not exempt the debtor from *maaser*.¹⁴ Only the monthly payment is considered a pressing debt, and if he struggles with that he is exempt.
- In situations when one cannot give *maaser*, the Rebbe would advise giving half of *maaser* (5%) or at least tenth of *maaser* (1%) to *tzedaka*, and to keep a record of all earnings to pay up the *maaser* when Hashem will bless with abundance *bez"H*.¹⁵

1. רמב"ם הל' מתנות עניים פ"ו ה"ה. מידות ושיעורי תורה (ביינש) פ"א (ושם שהשיעור המדויק הוא 5.5 גרם).
 2. ראה שו"ת הת"ס י"ד ס"ל ר"ב.
 3. שו"ת שבה"ל ח"ז ס' קצ"ה, ראה ט"ז ס' של"א ס"ק ל"ב.
 4. ראה ט"ז שם בשם הב"ח.
 5. ראה ערוה"ש י"ד ס' רנ"א ס"ה.
 6. ש"ך ס' רמ"ח סק"א.
 7. ט"ז או"ח ס' תרצ"ד סק"א, ערוה"ש י"ד ס' רמ"ח ס"ב (וראה אגה"ק לאדמו"ר"י ס' ט"ז).
 8. תשו"ה ח"א ס' תק"ס וראה ערוה"ש י"ד ס' רנ"א ס"ג-ו "דאל"כ ... במקומות שאין עשירים יגועו העניים ברעב".
 9. ראה ס' אהבת צדקה פ"ב ס"ב ובמילואים א' שם. ולהעיר מאנ"מ י"ד ח"ב ס' ק"ב שהחמיר כאשר יש לו ליום יום מזונות מצומצמים אבל אין לו לפרנסת השנה (ולהעיר מאחרונים שגדר פרנסת שנה נכלל גם באחד שיש לו עבודה מסודרת למרות שאין לו כל הכסף של שנה ביד). וראה שם תשו" ק"ג שפטר א' שמרווח פחות מכדי הוצאתו.
 10. ראה שו"ת תשב"ץ ח"ב ס' קל"א וקצוה"ח ח"מ ס' רי"ב סק"ו (ושניהם לכאורה יסכימו בעני שלא הפריש יד מלכים פ"ו הע' 57).
 11. שם פרק א' ס"א בשם שו"ת מהרי"ל ד"סק"ן פסקים ס' כ"ד (שאין אדם צריך לגרום שיהיה לו חוב).
 12. ספר חסידים ס' תנן. וראה אג"ק הכ"ט ע' רס"א.
 13. שו"ת שבה"ל ח"ז ס' קצ"ה.
 14. הגר"ש"א בס' הל' מעשר כספים הע' 681.
 15. אג"ק ח"ז ע' רס"ב והכ"ז ע' צ"א, וראה שלחן מנחם ח"ה ע' פ"ט. וראה ג"כ דרך אמונה פ"ז צה"ל ס"ק רי"ד.

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